

Romans
No Condemnation! (Part 2)
Romans 8:1-4
March 4,2018
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Well, I invite you to take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to Romans 8 as we have begun our journey through this favorite chapter of mine, I think in all the New Testament; I know for many of us, and certainly one of the richest in the book of Romans. If you were to do, as I did this last week, a simple news search on Google, you would find that over this past month in our country, there were people who were sentenced to death for their crimes. It's so common that I'm afraid, when we read such headlines, they don't really have a profound impact on us. We don't really catch the gravity of them. I don't think we can fully imagine what it would be like to be condemned to death.

Now don't misunderstand. I'm not advocating against the death penalty. In fact, the Scripture advocates entirely for it in the Noahic Covenant of Genesis 9. God commanded that the one who sheds man's blood by man, by the proper authority, shall his blood be shed, reiterated in the New Testament in Romans 13, government bears the sword to punish evildoers. Regardless though, I don't think we can fully understand and appreciate what it would be like.

I want you for just a moment as we begin our study this morning to try. I want you to try to imagine for a moment that you were the accused. Imagine the crushing weight of standing next to your attorney in some local courtroom, either in Dallas or Fort Worth; and as you stood there waiting with baited breath, you hear the jury foreman say, "We find the defendant guilty on all counts." And then a few days later, you entered that same courtroom. Once again, you stand, and you hear these chilling words as the judge says, "I hereby sentence you to death by lethal injection." Imagine knowing that you have absolutely no hope, that you will never leave the walls of that prison alive. I think for all of us that is truly unimaginable. It's hard for us to even get our arms around that.

But as bad as that would be, it doesn't even begin to compare to what every unrepentant sinner will one day hear when he stands before God, what you and I apart from Christ would have heard. Because our problem is infinitely worse than a condemned criminal standing in a criminal court in front of a human judge, because we have broken, not the laws of man, but we have broken the laws of God, our Creator, the Ruler of the universe.

In Galatians 3:10, we read, "... as many as are of the works of the Law [they] are under a curse; [They're under God's condemnation.] for it is written, 'CURSED [condemned] IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.'" Condemned by God, that's what we all were, condemned criminals sentenced to hell for eternity. But through His work on the cross, our Lord has completely, permanently removed our condemnation! That's what Paul is explaining to us in the first four verses of Romans 8.

Now, just to remind you, the theme of this entire chapter is this: Every believer in Jesus Christ is absolutely secure; he can never be ultimately lost; he or she is eternally secure. Paul explains that our salvation is secure, and our eternity is assured for several amazing reasons. Last week we began to study just the first paragraph in this chapter and the first great reason that we are secure; and that reason is this: God has delivered us from condemnation. God has delivered us from condemnation. We see this in the first four verses of Paul's letter to the Romans in the eighth chapter. Let's read it together; you follow along, Romans 8, beginning in verse 1.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Now as Paul develops this point, that God has delivered us from our condemnation in those first four verses, he does so in two ways. First of all, as we began to see last week, he declares the reality of no condemnation, the reality. Verse 1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Without Christ, we are condemned. God, our Lawgiver and Judge, has already found us guilty, and He's already pronounced the sentence, and all that remains is the execution of that sentence.

You know, there are a lot of people who think that someday they'll stand at the judgment and that's when God will make a final decision about their case. Maybe you think that; maybe you think, "Well, I'm just going to kind of keep doing the best I can, and it'll all turn out all right because the verdict is still out." Let me tell you on the basis of God's Word, the verdict on you, if you've not believed in Christ, is not still out. You are condemned just as all the rest of us would be apart from Jesus Christ. And all that will happen at the judgment is that condemnation will be formally announced.

But in this one stunning verse, verse 1 of chapter 8, we learn several key insights into this incredible reality that for believers in Jesus, "... there is now no condemnation." The first insight we saw is a logical connection. We see it in the word "Therefore" which connects back to, not to chapter 7 or even to chapter 6; those are sort of parentheses in Paul's thought, but back to the end of chapter 5. The second half of chapter 5 provides the legal basis on which a just God can declare wicked sinners to be righteous, and that legal basis is our representative; we are "in Christ," and we get the benefit of what He does. In that passage, in the second half of Romans 5, we find the only other two times that Paul uses this word "condemnation", and in that context, he concludes chapter 5 with the idea that there is "no condemnation for believers because we are in Christ," because He is our representative.

So, it makes sense then here in 8:1, that he picks up that same theme again. He skips over chapters 6 and 7, which were kind of a parentheses in his thought as he answered a couple of key questions and now he comes back to the main idea.

A second insight that we saw in verse 1 is our legal status, which is, "there is now no condemnation." We looked at that concept of condemnation; it means two things: to be condemned means to receive a verdict of guilty; and secondly, to be sentenced for the penalty that that crime deserves. That's condemnation, a guilty verdict and the sentence that it deserves. Paul says for the sinner who has been justified, for the sinner who has believed in Jesus and been declared right with God, there is no condemnation; neither of those things is true; there's no guilty verdict and there's no penalty awaiting us. "There is now no condemnation."

Thirdly, we saw the special beneficiaries there in verse 1, who receives this amazing declaration of no condemnation? It's those who are "in Christ Jesus." You see, there is only one way that we as condemned sinners can ever get rid of our condemnation. It's because we are connected to Jesus Christ. God changes our verdict from condemnation to no condemnation because of what Christ has done on our behalf.

Now that brings us today to the reason for no condemnation. We're still looking at this first major reason for our security; it's that God has delivered us from condemnation. We've seen the reality of that in verse 1; in verses 2 through 4 we see the reason for no condemnation. Let's take this passage apart. First of all, we discover here the reason itself which is our new freedom from God's Law; that's the reason there's no condemnation. It's because we enjoy a new freedom from God's Law. Look at verse 2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

Now, let me admit to you that that is a very difficult verse. In fact, there are a number of different interpretations of it, and some misinterpret this verse and end up on the wrong track for much of the first half of chapter 8. We don't want to do that; so let me just warn you about one common misunderstanding, and that is to conclude that the freedom that Paul is talking about here in verse 2 is the freedom as a Christian over the daily struggle with sin. In other words, there are those who say, "Well, Paul has just been talking about the struggle with sin at the end of chapter 7, and this freedom from sin must be that freedom, that daily struggle with sin." They teach, (and I have mentioned this before) this is the group that teachers that you need to stop living in the second half of Romans 7 and its defeat, and you need to start living in chapter 8 and the victory that's yours in Christ. "So, get out of chapter 7 and get into chapter 8," they say. And for them, what Paul is talking about here in verse 2 is that daily victory over sin. They would say, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the daily power and struggle of sin in your life."

But I don't believe verse 2 can be about sanctification, and that's true for a couple of reasons. Let me share them with you. I don't think that's what Paul is teaching here because notice the little word "For" that begins verse 2. When you read your Bibles, be looking for those little words that carry a heavy weight that show you the connection point between two ideas. This word "For" that begins verse 2 is one of those words. That little word means that verse 2 is the reason that there is "now no condemnation." So, if verse 2 is about our sanctification, then Paul is saying you are no longer condemned because you are now holy.

Now, think about that for a moment. He would be arguing that the basis on which you are right with God is a righteousness within you. The basis on which there is no condemnation is what you have done, your righteous thoughts and words and actions. Folks, that's not the biblical gospel. What I've just explained is actually a false works-based gospel. Now don't misunderstand me; not everyone who takes verse 2 to be teaching sanctification is teaching a false gospel; I'm not saying that. But I'm saying that's the logical conclusion of this if they're connected as Paul connects them.

A second reason that I really don't believe verse 2 is talking about sanctification is the main verb of verse 2. Notice, "has set you free." First of all, that little pronoun "you" is all the Christians to whom Paul was writing in Rome and therefore all of us. So, all Christians are included here, and the verb tense speaks of something that has already happened in the past to all Christians. He says, "all of you have been set free in this way." So, if he's talking about sanctification, it

just doesn't fit; it doesn't make sense. So, if that's not the proper understanding of verse 2, what is?

Listen carefully, verse 2 is not about our sanctification; it's about our justification, God declaring the believing sinner to be right with Him because of the work of Christ. Now let's look at it more carefully. You'll notice first of all that there are two laws mentioned in verse 2. First of all, there is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Now clearly that is referring to the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit made possible through the work of Christ. In fact, in John 6:63, the Spirit is described this way by Jesus Himself, "It is the Spirit who gives life." So we're talking about the life-giving power of the Spirit through the work of Christ. But what is the law of the Spirit? That's an interesting expression, the law of the Spirit. Well, it is the message of the gospel. You realize that the Spirit is the author of the gospel, and it's through the Spirit's power using that gospel that He brings us to life.

You say, "But why do we call it the law, why would he call it the gospel, the law of the Spirit? Well, Paul's already done this. You remember back in 3:27, he refers to the gospel as the "law of faith." In 2 Corinthians 3:8, he connects the gospel with the Spirit when he calls the gospel, "the ministry of the Spirit." And so "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the gospel which the Spirit uses to bring life, and that gospel is about the work of Jesus Christ. That's how all of that comes together.

Now, look at the second law mentioned in verse 2, it's "the law of sin and death." What's that? Some say, "Well, Paul just back at the end of chapter 7 referred to the law of sin which is in my members, this principle of ongoing struggle with sin that's in me." Maybe that's what he is talking about. Well, that's possible, but not likely; because again, notice the connection; notice verse 3 begins with the little word "For" again. And what follows in verse 3 clearly refers to the law of God. So "the law of sin and of death" must also be a reference to the law of God.

You say, "Well why would he call the law of God 'the law of sin and death?'" Well, he's done this before. You remember back in 7:9 - 11, we learned there that a proper understanding of God's Law, when you really get it, when you see what God commands, it leads to what? Sin! In two ways: One, it shows you your sin; it identifies your sin. But also, it awakens more sin. Just like when you tell a kid, "Don't touch that," and the child says, "Touch what?" That's what the law does for us as well. It is therefore the law of sin. It awakens sin in us. And what does that sin lead to? "The wages of sin is death," so God's Law then can properly, and he's already called it that back in chapter 7, he called "the law of sin and of death."

So here, then, let me put it all together. Listen carefully; in verse 2, Paul is saying that the Spirit's power, working in and through the gospel, has forever freed us from the demands and penalty of God's Law, the law that for us only brought sin and death. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been set permanently free from God's Law.

Now, let me speak for a moment to those of you who are here who know you're not in Christ. For whatever reason, you find yourself here, but you know you're not a true follower of Jesus Christ; you've never humbled yourself and confessed your sin and put your faith in Jesus Christ and confessed Him as Lord; you know that's true. Let me tell you your situation. You are still under God's Law is the expression Paul uses. What does that mean? Well, it means you have three options. If you're not a believer, when it comes to God's Law, what God has told you to do, you have three options.

Option number one: You can keep it perfectly and earn eternal life, which of course is an impossibility. You already can check that one off; you can't do that; you haven't done that. Neither have I. Perfect love for God, perfect love for others; do that and live, the Bible says. But you haven't done it, and I haven't done it; so just check that one off; that's not a valid option.

Option number two: Fail to keep God's Law perfectly and be punished eternally for every violation against God and His Law. And option number three, and by the way, option number two, that happens if you do nothing.

Option number three: Turn in faith and repentance to Jesus Christ, admitting your own inability and clinging solely to the righteousness of Jesus Christ to His perfect life, to His substitutionary death, to His resurrection. If you are a Christian, that is exactly what happened at the moment of your salvation. You repented and believed. And when that happened, you were removed from the demands of the law.

Look back in 6:14, he says in the second half of the verse, "you are not under law but under grace." He says it again in chapter 7; 7:4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." Verse 6, "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in [the] newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

Free from the law, but what does that mean? In what sense are we free from the law? Only in this sense: we are no longer under the law as a way to be justified before God. Here's what you are free from, believer. You are free from trying to keep God's Law as a way to earn your own personal righteousness, to earn your way into God's favor, to earn heaven. Paul puts it this way in Acts 13:39, "... through ... [Christ] everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." Or take what I think is the most concise statement about the role of the law in the entire Bible, Galatians 2:19, here it is; it doesn't get any more concise than this: "... through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God." Through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. What does that mean? John Gerstner writes this:

Paul meant that the Law became his teacher to lead him away from itself to the Savior. When he fully comprehended the Law's meaning, he realized what a violator of it he actually was, and he died to it; [In what way? Listen to this.] as the meritorious ground of salvation.

That's how you died to the Law, that somehow keeping it, you would merit salvation with God. So then the main point of verse 2 is that the Holy Spirit through the gospel has freed us from the demands of the Law, has freed us from, "keep it and live, or break it and be condemned." And that's why there is "Therefore ... now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Now, that brings us to verse 3. And here we discover how our freedom from the law that led to our no condemnation was actually accomplished. How did God accomplish this freedom that we now have from the law and therefore we have no condemnation? Verse 3 gives us the means, and the means is the sacrifice of Christ. Notice verse 3 again begins with that word "For." Here is the means that God used to bring condemned, hell-deserving sinners to a status of no condemnation. How did that happen? Verse 3, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did."

Notice first of all that expression, "What the Law could not do." What could the Law not do? The Law couldn't do two things. God's Law, as good as it was, as helpful as it was, as pure as it is, as much of a reflection of God's character as it is, God's moral law, the Ten Commandments, the great commands to love God and love others, it can't do two things.

Number one, it can't justify us; it could never justify us before God. Chapter 3:20, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight." The Law could never justify us. It could never deliver us from the penalty of our sin. It could never accomplish our salvation.

But there's a second thing the law could never do: Not only could it not justify us, but the law could never make us righteous. Try as we might to keep it, we would never actually arrive at righteousness. Galatians 3:21, "if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law;" that is God's Law. God's Law couldn't do it either. It couldn't justify us, and it couldn't make us truly righteous. Why?

Why couldn't the law do these two things? Verse 3 says it; "weak as it was through the flesh," that is your flesh, your humanness, your fallenness, and mine as well. You see, there's nothing wrong with the law. Remember what (back in chapter 7) Paul just said about the law? He says it's holy. It's righteous. It's good. It's spiritual. Our problem is not God's Law. The problem is us.

Now look again at verse 3, so "what the Law could not do, [It couldn't justify. It couldn't make us righteous.] weak as it was ... [because of our] flesh, [because of our fallenness in sin,] God *did*." Underline those two words; I love those two words; they are powerful, intentional, beautiful words, "God did." In other words, God took the initiative to do what the law of God could never do.

Can I just stop here a moment and make a really crucial point about your spiritual life if you're a Christian? By God's grace, I saw this and learned this lesson when I was a senior in college. I saw it from Ephesians 2, but here's the point I want you to get, you will never enjoy a personal sense of your security in your salvation, you will never enjoy that sense personally until you come to realize that your salvation had nothing to do with you. Because as long as you think that you somehow initiated it, you were somehow the active initiating party, that you heard the gospel, and you were intelligent enough to believe it, and it was your faith and your repentance that generated all of this, then you know yourself like I know myself, and you can begin to question that. But when you realize, as Ephesians 2 says, that when God found you, you were dead. So, how much can a dead person contribute to his rescue? Try none! You were dead and God made you alive. Salvation is entirely the work of God from beginning to end; and when you understand that, it brings a great sense of security because I didn't start it, I'm not keeping it going, and I'm not the one responsible to finish it. Salvation is from God from beginning to end.

Now next Paul tells us exactly what God did, verse 3, “God ... sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” That remarkable verse, that remarkable part of a verse, is the gospel of Jesus Christ in a tiny little package; it’s all there. Paul explains exactly what God did in four expressions; let me give them to you briefly.

Number one: God sent His own son; God sent His own son. Verse 3 says, “sending His own Son.” When you read that, it immediately brings back the words of the Apostle John, right? When he talks about God's only begotten Son, when you hear the word “only begotten,” don't think birth; that’s not what it means. In fact, it’s better translated “God’s unique one-of-a-kind Son.” That’s how it’s used elsewhere in Scripture, of a son of Abraham, his unique one-of-a-kind son, that was Isaac. It wasn’t his only son; it was his unique one-of-a-kind son, and that’s what’s true of Jesus.

By the way, there’s a lot of rich theology in the statement that “He sent His own Son.” The fact that God the Father sent His Son argues for the doctrine of the Trinity, right? You’ve got two persons acting; of course the Spirit is involved as well. The fact that He was already His Son and that God sent Him implies His preexistence. He existed before the incarnation. And this expression, “God sent Him,” as we learn even from the most familiar verse in the Bible, John 3:16, implies both the incarnation, that He became one of us; and redemption, that He came to purchase our salvation; “God sent His own Son.”

A second expression here of the gospel is: “God sent His Son as a sinless human being.” Verse 3 says, “sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Look at the incredible precision in that statement. Think about this, if Christ had not come as Paul puts it here, “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” then he wouldn't really be one of us; and if Christ wasn’t really one of us, then He isn’t qualified to be our substitute and to die in our place. But think about the disastrous consequences if Paul had omitted just one word in that statement, “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” What if Paul had said, “He came in the likeness of flesh?” He possibly might have implied that He wasn’t really a man, but Jesus’s humanity was real. If he had said, “He came in flesh,” then he might have implied that He was just a man, but Jesus was more than that; He was the God-man. If he had said that “He came in sinful flesh,” left out the word “likeness,” it would have clearly implied that Jesus was personally tainted by sin. But Jesus was sinless. And so the only theologically accurate way Paul could express this is exactly the way he does, “He came in the likeness of sinful flesh.” In other words, God has become just like us; God’s Son became

just like us except for sin. His humanity was both real, and it was sinless. That's His point. The precision of God's Word is truly amazing.

There's a third expression here: "God sent His Son to be an offering for sin." God sent Him for this very specific purpose, as an offering for sin. Now you'll notice the words "for an offering" or "as an offering" are in italics in our Bible. That's because they're not in the original. Literally, he just says, "He sent Him for sin." Now at first glance that might seem to be pretty generic, what do you mean "He sent Him for sin?" Well, it becomes very clear when you realize that that exact Greek expression occurs in the Septuagint often in both Leviticus and Numbers to translate a Hebrew expression that is unequivocally clear, and the Hebrew expression is, "a sin offering." So, Paul takes this translation and makes it his, and it simply means "a sin offering".

This is why Jesus died. He didn't die for Himself. He died in the place of others for what reason? As a sin offering, 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, ... that he might bring us to God." Or, more specifically to the point, Isaiah 53:10 where we're told that the Messiah rendered Himself *as* a guilt offering. That was the reason He died, as a sin offering, as a guilt offering. Do you understand that Jesus laid down His life? God sent Him to make an offering, a sacrifice for sin, to be a sin offering to God.

There's a fourth expression of what God did here: "He condemned sin in the flesh." Verse 3 says it explicitly, "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." Here was what God accomplished by sending His Son as a sinless human being to be an offering for sin, God "condemned sin in the flesh." Not your flesh, Jesus' flesh; God condemned sin, your sin, in Jesus' flesh. That's the point in His humanity. God declared His sinless Son guilty of your specific crimes, and then He carried out the sentence that your sins that earned on His own Son.

Folks, don't shortchange the work of Christ on the cross. You know, when we think of Christ's suffering, we typically focus on the physical suffering. Back a few years ago there was a film that came out by Mel Gibson called "The Passion of the Christ" that was obsessed with Jesus' physical suffering; and it's true; His physical suffering was horrific and biblically and theologically, His physical suffering was part of the atonement. But the point of Jesus's death was not primarily the physical suffering; it was His experiencing the wrath of God on our behalf, and you simply can't reduce that to digital images. What made the death of Christ different was that He died under the full weight of God's condemnation. God condemned your sins in Jesus' flesh. This was the means God used. He delivered us from the penalty of breaking His Law by

bearing its condemnation as our substitute, that's what Jesus did. The condemnation that our sins deserve, both the verdict of guilty and the sentence of God's wrath, was poured out on Christ, and that is the only reason there is "therefore ... now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." God condemned your sins in Jesus's flesh.

Lastly, Paul explains in verse 4, the result of all of this, and the result is the fulfillment of God's law. Notice verse 4 begins, "so that." Here is I think both the purpose and the result of God's condemning our sin in Christ's flesh, "so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us."

Now, first of all, what does Paul mean by the "requirement of the Law?" Well the plural form of that Greek word is used over 100 times in the Septuagint to speak of God's statutes, His ordinances. The New Testament uses it the same way, but notice, Paul doesn't say plural; he doesn't say the requirements, plural, of the Law as implying all the individual commands. He says the requirement of the Law, singular. So, what is the unified command of God's Law? If you had to reduce all of God's little laws to one great command, what would it be? You're not on your own here. Okay, this is not a trick question. What did Jesus say? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." In other words, the requirement of the Law is perfect love for God and perfect love for others. That's what he's talking about here. Paul means the righteousness the law demands.

But the question in verse 4 is who fulfills the righteousness that the law demands? Well, at the risk of confusing you, let me tell you that there are two viable options. There are two viable options that actually divide Reformed scholars. There are good men on both sides of this question. Let me give both of them to you, and then I'll tell you where I land and why.

What verse 4 may mean is that Christ fulfilled the Law for us by keeping it perfectly, "that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled." This is the view of most of the early church fathers; it's the view of many of the reformers, including John Calvin and others; it's the view of the great commentator on the book of Romans, Charles Hodge. And they would say this:

In verse 4, the one meeting the requirement of the Law is Christ, not us. As our substitute, He satisfied the righteous requirement of the Law, living for 33 years a perfect life of obedience; and then having lived a perfect life, God laid on Him, the only perfect One, the condemnation we deserve, and he condemned our sin in

the perfect One; and in so doing, God made it possible to transfer Christ's perfect obedience to us.

In other words, those who take this view would say that in verses 3 and 4, you have the great exchange. Christ becomes what we are, condemned sinners, so that we might become what Christ is, perfectly righteous. So, they would say, "We don't meet the just requirements of the Law through our acts of obedience, but through our being in Christ since He perfectly fulfilled the Law and we are in Him, it is as if we have fulfilled the Law perfectly through our legal representative, Jesus Christ.

Now let me just say that everything I just said in this first view, I wholeheartedly, unreservedly affirm as the truth, all right? I believe everything I've just described, and we have seen this on many occasions in the book of Romans so far, and we'll still see it more. So, Paul teaches this clearly. I'm just not sure that this is what Paul is saying in verse 4.

I actually lean toward the second option. I give you the first one because it may in fact be what Paul intends, and there are many good men who believe it is. It's certainly true whether that's what he's saying there in verse 4 or not. But I lean toward the second option and it's this, verse 4 is saying that Christians fulfill the Law by righteous lives of obedience in the power of the Spirit. This isn't the means of our justification, but it's the result. This, by the way, is the view of such men as Lloyd-Jones, John Murray, the great Presbyterian commentator, William Henriksen and others. I lean toward this view because of what Paul says in verse 4. Notice he doesn't say, "The requirement of the Law is fulfilled for us by Christ," which is true, but that isn't what he says. He says, the righteous "requirement of the Law ... [is] fulfilled in us."

If this is what Paul is teaching, I am increasingly convinced that is, then Paul's point here is this, ultimately God sent His Son, and He offered Him for our sin. He condemned our sin in Jesus's flesh so that we in turn would live holy lives that reflect the moral character of His Son. In other words, verse 2 is about our justification, verse 4 is about our sanctification. This is what even the New Covenant promise is, right? Ezekiel 36:27, after the cleansing, that pictures all that happens in salvation, God says, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes." So, the ultimate purpose that God had in saving you and sending Christ to accomplish your salvation and condemning your sin in Jesus' flesh, was so that you would live a life of righteousness that honors your Savior.

He ends verse 4 by saying this, “so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Now folks, that is not a command; that is not an admonition; that is a statement of fact, and it doesn't apply just to a few super spiritual Christians. It applies to all. “Walk” is Paul's favorite word to describe the daily moral behavior of a person, and he says, “every person.” Let me put it very personally and directly, “you, every person here, is walking in one of these two very different realms. You are either walking according to the flesh, or you are walking according to the Spirit.” To be walking according to the flesh is to be outside of Christ. It's to be lost. It's to be a sinner, condemned.

To be walking according to the Spirit, as we will see, is to be a believer. If your life demonstrates that you are walking in obedience to the Spirit, that doesn't make you a Christian, but it shows that you are; and there is “Therefore ... now no condemnation for...” you. Why is there no condemnation for you? Because you are freed by the Spirit through the gospel from the demands of the Law, “do this and live.” Somebody else has done it for you, and God condemned your sin in the flesh of Jesus Christ so that He could forgive you. This is here to encourage you, believer. This is here to remind you that God has pronounced over you now and forever, “not condemned!” And that'll never change. God's verdict is eternally final.

But I don't want you to miss the crucial points that verse 4 gives us because it introduces the next section to us. Let me just very quickly give you the crucial points verse 4 makes, there are four of them, because it sort of serves as a bridge to where we're going, Lord willing, the next time we look at Romans, four crucial points from verse 4.

Number one: God's ultimate purpose behind the incarnation and the atonement, the death of Christ, was not just your salvation, but your sanctification. “So that,” he says in verse 4, you might walk in a way that's worthy; this is what he says in other places. Go down to 8:29, “For those whom he foreknew...” That is those with whom God predetermined a relationship, that's the idea there; that's election. When He predetermined the relationship, he also predestined, that is He pre-determined our destiny. When He chose us in eternity past, He predetermined our destiny and here it is, “*to become conformed to the image of His Son.*” This has always been God's plan. He didn't just save you so you can get out of hell. He didn't just save you so that you can live however you want. He saved you for a purpose, and that was, so that you would for eternity reflect the moral character of His Son and bring His Son glory in so doing.

That's what Ephesians 2:10, says. “... we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ... [unto] good works.” We're not saved by good works; were saved unto good works. We're saved by

faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, but we're saved unto good works, "which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Or take Titus 2:14, He "... gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." He redeemed us so that we would be zealous for good deeds. First Peter 2:24, "... He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that [Do you hear the purpose?] so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness...."

Secondly: another crucial point we see here in verse 4 is that sanctification always accompanies justification. There's no such thing, folks, as a perpetual, carnal Christian! If that's how you're justifying your life, mark it off; it's not true. Here we are told that Christians, by their very nature, do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And we're going to see more of that.

Number three: Sanctification consists in growing obedience to the requirement of God's Law. That's what verse 4 says, right? "So that ... [it can] be fulfilled in us," and what is that requirement? Perfect love for God and perfect love for others, that's sanctification, growing in those two great commandments that summarize the requirement of the Law.

And number four: Sanctification is ultimately the work of the Spirit, and this is what we will see in the next section as we look at it together. But what I want you to see, the big picture as we finish this study, is that God wants you to know and experience security in your faith, and you can experience that security because God has delivered us from condemnation, there is "Therefore ... now no condemnation ... [to] those who are in Christ Jesus": no guilty verdict, no sentence, no coming execution; only eternal joy in the presence of our Savior.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for its clarity as it speaks to our lives. Father, we are so thankful for the encouragement that You have given us here. Thank you that there is no condemnation. How can we ever, Father, begin to thank you that You accomplished this by condemning our sin in the body of Jesus Christ and treating Him as if He had committed our sins so that forever You could treat us as if we had committed His acts of righteousness? Father, we thank You and bless You.

May you cause these truths to be for our good. Lord, let us meditate on them; let us think about them. Let us live in light of them. Don't let us close our Bibles and put away our notes and walk out of here unchanged. Father, may we think about this passage; may we live under its implications so that we can enjoy the joy and the security of knowing that we are in Christ, and in Him, there is no condemnation.

Father, I pray for the person here this morning, the many undoubtedly who are here this morning, who are not in Christ. Lord, this is the gospel. They've heard the gospel, and I pray this morning that You would call them through that gospel, through the power of your Spirit who gives life; give them life. Father, they're spiritually dead. Use this message to bring life. May they repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord, even today?

I pray it in His name, Amen.