



PRACTICING THE RESURRECTION | NO CONDEMNATION! (31)

April 27, 2025

Romans 8:1-11

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

This week, we're going to begin a new series looking at Romans 8. Inspired by N. T. Wright's book "Into the Heart of Romans," this series will take a deep dive into one of the most spectacular pieces of writing in the Bible. Metaphors used by other theologians to refer to Romans 8 include "the inner sanctuary within the cathedral of Christian faith," "the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden," and "the highest peak in a range of mountains." Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a well-known 20th-century Welsh preacher, wrote:

It is one of the brightest gems of all. Someone has said that in the whole of the Scriptures the brightest and the most lustrous and flashing stone, or collection of stones, is this Epistle to the Romans, and that of these [chapter 8] is the brightest gem in the cluster. The most moving [chapter in Romans] is this chapter 8.

N. T. Wright explains that in this one chapter, the reader can find all of the major biblical and theological themes from Genesis to Revelation (the Trinity, Jesus the Messiah, the cross and resurrection, salvation, covenant, apocalypse). "Romans 8," he states, "is all these things because it is the climactic argument for what preachers call assurance: the conviction that 'nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love.'" We're in a new series called *Practicing the Resurrection*, and this week we'll look at the topic of "no condemnation."

SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:1-11

READING

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

BIBLE STUDY 1. Looking at the Bible

- Read the passage privately. What does the text say? What is the theme of this passage? Do you notice any keywords?

Digging Deeper:

Themes: no condemnation, assurance

Keywords: law, Spirit

In his book, N. T. Wright explains that Romans 8 is the chapter of assurance. Though lengthy, it might be helpful to read this following excerpt from the book that summarizes Romans 8:

From the dramatic opening (“there is therefore now no condemnation for those in Messiah Jesus”) to the triumphant conclusion (“nothing in all creation can separate us from God’s love in the Messiah Jesus”) the chapter is designed to say to anxious Christians, and especially to Christians suffering and/or being persecuted, that their future salvation (rescue from death itself in the new creation) is rock-solid secure. It is guaranteed by the work of the Messiah himself (his death, resurrection, ascension and continuing intercession) and by the work of the holy spirit, leading Jesus’ people in the path of holiness and enabling them to share in God’s rescuing work through the prayer which, inspired by the spirit, arises from the midst of suffering.

In verses 1-11, Paul explains that there is no condemnation because of the Messiah’s death and the Spirit’s life-giving power. We must be careful to not immediately associate the word “law” with the Mosaic Law. Tim Keller explains that Paul uses the word “law” or *nomos* to mean: 1) God’s law or standards, 2) a general principle, or 3) a force or power. In the context of our passage, Paul isn’t talking about the Old Testament Mosaic Law; rather, he’s talking about the life-giving power of the Spirit freeing us from the bondage of sin. The word for Spirit is *pneuma*, and it occurs 21 times in this chapter alone — almost once every two verses. Although the word Spirit is used in this chapter more than any other chapter of the Bible, Douglas Moo explains in his commentary that Romans 8 isn’t about the Holy Spirit. Moo writes:

Paul’s focus is not so much on the Spirit, but on what the Spirit does. And perhaps this is the best way to learn about the Spirit. For as important as it may be to define the nature of the Holy Spirit and his relation to Christ and the Father, the Spirit is best known in his ministry on behalf of Christians. It is those blessings and privileges conferred on believers by the Spirit that are the theme of this chapter.

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- We looked at how verse 1 gives a tremendous assurance for Christians. However, our sin may cause us to experience guilt or shame that reflects the attitude of “I know the Lord has forgiven me, but I just can’t forgive myself.” Have you ever felt this or know someone who has? How does today’s text in Romans 8 speak to that?

Digging Deeper:

Robert D. Jones, a Baptist pastor and counselor, identifies five deeper underlying reasons for people who struggle with self-forgiveness: 1) doubt in God’s forgiveness and love, 2) unwillingness to acknowledge one’s depravity, 3) attempt to establish one’s own standards of righteousness, 4) regrets for unfulfilled wishes, 5) declaration of oneself to be one’s own judge. Granted, most cases will be a mixture of multiple factors. However, numerous pastors and theologians have approached this issue primarily from the fifth assumption — the person has ascended to the throne of judgement and is saying, “I am the judge, and I will decide.” C. S. Lewis explained that if God says we’re forgiven, we must be able to forgive ourselves. Otherwise, Lewis writes, “It is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than God.” R. C. Sproul points out that it’s our pride that makes it difficult to accept God’s free, gracious forgiveness.

However, Paul explains that in Christ there is no condemnation (verse 1), and that Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law (verse 4). Jesus has finished the work on the cross (John 19:30) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands (Colossians 2:13-14). Jesus became sin for us so that in Christ we might become God’s righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). Paul exhorts believers to have assurance in God’s forgiveness given our new identity in Jesus the Messiah. We will still sin as believers, but because of Christ’s death on the cross, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9).

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Verse 5 introduces what a life lived according to the Spirit looks like: setting one’s mind not on the things of the flesh but on the things of the Spirit. Paul goes on to say that the mind that is set on the flesh is “hostile to God” (verse 7). Why is it so important to control our thoughts?
- Read verse 6. Have you experienced “life and peace” as you’ve meditated on Jesus and the things of the Spirit? Or to the contrary, have you experienced the repercussions of “death” in forgetting the gospel and its implications?

Digging Deeper:

Paul heavily emphasizes the importance of our thought life in verses 5-11. This is echoed in his other letters as well: “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2). “Take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5b).

However, it's not a "try-harder" approach to sanctification; in other words, just "make sure to keep thinking about Jesus." Paul's reminding us of our position in Christ. The rest of Romans 8 explains that in Jesus we are adopted as God's children and unconditionally loved. To worry is human, and it leads to anger, fear, sadness... all the emotions of human nature. Paul is exhorting the believers to take those emotions to God and to remind ourselves of the gospel — our position in Christ — in the midst of our anxiety and suffering. Philippians 4:6-8 would be helpful to read together. When we are afraid, we pray to God with our honest emotions, and his peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Verse 8 ends with, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

4. Looking at our World

- In his book, N. T. Wright criticizes the modern Christian's limited understanding of salvation — "The gospel is about me going to heaven." However, Wright explains salvation as a vocation — a calling for the renewed people of God to be his agents in making all things new. "We are saved, not from the world but for the world." How is this view of salvation different, and what implications would this have in living out the gospel in this world?

Digging Deeper:

This prompt is intended for open-ended discussion among the group.

SHARING Share your prayer requests, thoughts, hopes and fears for the coming week, and as you do consider how this passage might give light to what you are sharing.

KINGDOM Pray that we would see ourselves called by God.

PRAYER Include other prayer requests.

SENDING God's word is a lamp to our feet. Christ's teachings are a light to our path. May God's word take root in our lives. May Christ's love nourish and sustain us. Amen.