

I. Intro

[Greeting & Niceties]

We're continuing our series in the book of Romans and today we finally come to Romans 8. Honestly, friends, I know that studying the Bible is like having children - you're not supposed to pick favorites; it's all God's word equally. And at the same time, from my point of view, Romans 8 is one of the greatest chapters in the whole Bible. One of my heroes calls Romans 8 the "Mount Everest"¹ of the Bible. Martin Luther, the protestant reformer said, "If the Bible were a ring then Romans would be the gem that enhanced that ring...Romans 8 would be the brilliant splendor that emanated from that ring."² So much in this chapter is worth savoring! So we're going to take our time in Romans 8. As long as the Lord doesn't interrupt us, we're going to take the rest of May and the whole month of June to work through this chapter and that will be the culmination of this leg of our journey through Romans. After that we'll take a break from Romans for the rest of summer.

Now, one of the real "downers" about being a pastor who preaches is that when I preach I will put 10-20 hours of work into a sermon and I'll deliver it on a Sunday morning and then by Tuesday most of us will have forgotten it (including me!). Now you don't have to feel guilty about that. That's just how our minds work. And I've come to terms with that. The Lord works through preaching and I'm grateful to pour myself into it. But today I have a secret weapon. Because I also know that most of us won't remember the sermon by Tuesday, but if I asked you to sing the theme song from the show you watched 20 years ago, you could. So today, we're going to sing Romans 8:1-2 together. And that way even if you forget the message by Tuesday, God's word will be hidden in your heart.

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¹ **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ.**

IV I vi V IV vi V
² **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.**

Now, we look at God's word every week. I want you to be formed and shaped and encouraged and challenged by God's word every week. Why take the time and extra effort to help you memorize these particular verses? Well for one, I knew the song. You can go find it if you search "Immanuel Worship" and look for an album called "Romans 8 Live." The whole album is a meditation on different portions of Romans 8 and I'd love for you to listen to it. But I didn't just teach you the song because I already knew the tune. **I want you to be able to remember Romans 8:1-2 because you can build a whole life on these two verses.** There are, hidden here in these lines, wayfinders for a life of joy and purpose and courage and confidence and security. As you go through life, when you experience disorientation and discouragement, when you feel like you are beginning to lose your way there are signposts here in this text that will help you regain your footing. When you are losing your grip on joy and purpose and courage, there the hand holds here that you can grab onto.

So in the message today, I want to break down the text into three signposts, three hand holds for us to grab and then I want to imagine together the possibilities of a life lived in light of what these verses

¹ Matt Chandler, "The Overcomers"

² Heard all over the place, found on [The Journey Blog from Steve DeWitt](#)

are teaching us. So, let's pray for God's help to see and believe. *God our Father, you've given your word for the sake of our good. I pray that you would send your Spirit to create in us a hunger to be formed by this word, and to strengthen us to see the glory of Christ and take hold of your truth. Help us so that your name might be glorified in us. Amen.*

II. Teach the Text

I said I wanted to highlight three "handholds" for us to take hold of in the text. I'm going to tell them to you right now: (1) Therefore, (2) No Condemnation in Christ, and (3) Freedom in Christ. If you needed to boil down Romans 8:1-2 into bullet points, that's it: (1) Therefore, (2) No Condemnation in Christ, (3) Freedom in Christ.

THEREFORE

The old bible study motto is whenever you encounter a "therefore" in the Bible you have to ask what it's *there for*. That word means that whatever I'm about to say doesn't make sense unless you base it on something I've already said. So when the Apostle Paul writes in verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation..." he wants us to connect what he's about to say to what he's already said. So what has he already said in Romans?

Well. A lot... He's said seven chapters worth of things! And so the question becomes, *Which part of your teaching are we supposed to connect here, Paul? Are we supposed to dig up something from chapter one, or chapter three, or chapter five to connect to what you're about to say? Or is chapter eight just directly building off of chapter seven?*

Well we need to remember that the Book of Romans was written as a letter that would be read to the church in Rome. Romans is one sermon that we've broken down into chapters and verses. We divide it up and study it in chunks, but it was written for the church to hear all at once. Which means that the "therefore" here in Romans 8:1 is probably directly related to Romans 7, but it's also understood through the lens of the whole letter.

So what's Paul been teaching in chapters 1-7? Well for Paul the spark that ignites the bonfire of Romans is in 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." The gospel is a saving message to people who need saving. Why do we need saving? Because the most fundamental problem in the universe is that every single human being has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and is under God's right and justified wrath. We are living in the problem of our rebellion: we've sinned against God. And because God is holy, because God is righteous, because God made us to flourish and thrive under his good commands and in our sin we've ignored his kindness, and disregarded his worth, and disbelieved in him, and disobeyed him, and dishonored him - that means that we're also living in the problem of what we deserve: we deserve his wrath for our sin. One pastor said that our sin is, "the ultimate outrage of the Universe"³

³ John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-greatest-thing-in-the-world>

The first objective of the book of Romans is to hold up the ultimate reality of God and to show that every single human being is living under condemnation and that condemnation is God's moral, right, unimpeachable, just response to sin.

And then the book goes on to teach that the works of the law cannot save you, religious fervor can't make you right with God. The only way you can be right with God is by putting your faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, in his life lived the sinless holy life that humanity was meant to live, Jesus Christ, in his death bore the punishment that we deserved and paid the debt for our sin that we could not pay, Jesus Christ in his resurrection brings new life and makes us new people. Only faith in Christ can make you right with God!

And in Romans 6 & 7, Paul begins to teach that not only can faith in Christ change your status and make you justified before God. But faith in Jesus gives you a new heart with new desires. Not only are you declared free from slavery, but you can live as freed person. And as we saw in our study of Romans 7 last week, we are justified in Christ in a moment. We are sanctified - we become more and more like Jesus, for the rest of our lives. Our life as followers of Jesus is a process of wrestling with sin and stumbling and doing the very things that we do not want to do. It is a process in which the ending is guaranteed, but along the way we cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will save me from this sin that still seems so entangled into who I am?"

All of that is the foundation on which Paul says, "There is therefore now..." However far back we look in Romans, whether we look at Romans 7 or we look at the whole letter, we see a picture of a people whose foundational problem is sin and God's wrath for sin, and whose only solution for dealing with this problem is to fling ourselves on the mercy of God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. Wretched people that we are! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So our first handhold in Romans 8:1-2 is all of this that's implied in the word "therefore": You were dead because of sin, but God has made a way for you to be justified and sanctified in Jesus Christ. And it is on this foundation that Paul makes this glorious statement: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

This is the second hand hold for us to cling to in the text.

This line. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." I love this sentence! This is a sentence for when your brother in Christ calls you at 2:00 o'clock in the morning in manic despair because they lost another battle with temptation and the fight with sin feels unending and exhausting. This is a sentence for when the devil won't stop whispering in your ear that you are defined by your lowest moments. This is a sentence for when the world surrounds you like an enemy force on all sides and seeks to drag your name through the mud and laugh at your misfortune. This is a sentence for when you can't escape the rut of tearing yourself down and you're drowning in shame. *There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ!* This is a sentence for all of those moments.

But you will not know the true weight and power of that sentence if you don't force yourself to think beyond the ways our world usually thinks about condemnation.

In our common vernacular we think of condemnation in therapeutic terms. She said this thing about me and now I feel a sense of shame and guilt. I feel condemned. Or, I can't stop my negative self-talk, so I am dealing with self-condemnation. But you have to understand what Paul primarily has in mind here. He's not talking about the condemnation of your negative self-talk. He's not talking about the condemnation you carry from the judgements of other people. He's not even talking about the sense of condemnation that comes from the Devil who is the accuser of God's people.

What we are meant to understand is, there is no condemnation from GOD for those who are in Christ. That condemnation that you deserve because of your sin. That guilty sentence from the judge that by all rights you and I should be receiving because we have worshiped and served created things instead of our Creator. That everlasting, neverending wrath that you justly deserve because you have disregarded the most worthy being in the universe. There is no condemnation from him!

And the reason there is no condemnation is because at the cross Jesus was condemned for us, in our place. At the cross, Jesus - though he was innocent - bore our guilt and served the sentence that the judge should have given us. God took every evil thought, every wicked deed, every moment of falling short, every bit of our wrongness and brokenness and he nailed it to the cross and put it to death. And now, if you are a Christian, you are united to Christ! You are in him! Which means you have died with him. And if we have been united with him in a death like his, surely we will be united with him in a resurrection like his, which means if you are in Christ, the condemnation of God has been poured out and there is none left!

There isn't less condemnation! Like, the cross of Christ didn't just take the edge off for you. There is no condemnation for you. The Father looks at you and has nothing but delight in you in Christ Jesus. And friend, there is therefore now no condemnation. That means he's not just holding his wrath back until you get it together tomorrow or next year. Right now, not someday, right now there is no condemnation for you in Christ. God brought about his full and final punishment for our sin at the death of Christ. Jesus meant it when he said, "it is finished!" Because in Christ there is no condemnation left for you!

Now, listen, if you've ever been in love you know that feeling that this other person who you've fallen in love with is the center of your universe. If they don't love you, then the whole world must be wrong. But if they love you, then it doesn't matter what happens in the rest of the world - the world is right because they love you. Now, listen, friends: God, the literal center of all creation who is before all things and holds all things together who was, is, and is to come, GOD has no condemnation for you. And if God has no condemnation for you in Christ, then that means that all those other forms of condemnation - the accusations of the enemy, the shame that comes from others, all your negative self-talk... If God looks at you and says, "no condemnation" then the rest of it melts away in the light of his love approval of you in Jesus.

This is why it says at the end of the chapter: ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

In Jesus there is no condemnation from God and If God is for us, who can be against us?

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

We said the handholds from the text are: (1)Therefore, (2)no condemnation in Christ, and finally (3) Freedom in Christ.

This is the other side of the coin from no condemnation. Condemnation is the sentence given by the judge and in Jesus the sentence has been served and there is none left. But the gospel is more than getting a clean slate. The gospel doesn't just deliver us from condemnation, the gospel delivers us into a new way of being. This is what Paul means when he says in verse 2, "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."

I know we're getting near the end, but keep pressing in with me. The way Paul uses the word "the law" in Romans can sometimes be confusing. Sometimes he means the Jewish law, the Law of Moses. Sometimes he's talking about a rule or principle like in the last chapter when he says, "so I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand." He just means I find it to be a principle. And sometimes when he uses the word "law" he means a force or a power.

So when Paul says, "the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." Don't let that throw you. He's saying in your old life there was a power at work: sin reigned in your life. And we know from Paul that the wages of sin is death. So there is a force or power of sin and death at work in the lives of everyone who doesn't believe. But when you are united to Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit comes into your life. And the power (or the law) of the Spirit sets us free through Christ from that old law. Paul is really harkening back to that analogy he used back in Romans 6 where he said, you were once a slave to sin, but now you are slaves to righteousness. Christ, by his Spirit, has emancipated you from slavery and now because the law of the Spirit of life is at work in you, you are able to live as a free person even if you may struggle to live out the freedom that's been given to you.

Paul says this in a different way in his letter to the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 3 he says, "⁶ For the letter [the law] kills, but the Spirit gives life...¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." You see where the power of the Holy Spirit is, there is life instead of death, freedom instead of slavery to sin, and a new creation being transformed into the image of Christ.

And all that means that not only do you have a clean slate in the gospel, but God has equipped you for walking into the kind of life he calls you to: life in the Spirit.

III. Build Your Life On These Verses

(1) Therefore, (2) No Condemnation in Christ, and (3) Freedom in Christ. These are the wayfinders for beat up, disoriented, often failing, uninspiring people like you and me. When we lose sight of the wayforward and begin to lose our footing, this is our firm foundation. You can build a whole life on (1)

Therefore, (2) No Condemnation in Christ, and (3) Freedom in Christ. But too many of us lead lives that are characterized by condemnation and slavery.

Some of you haven't trusted Christ for salvation and so you're not justified before God, you haven't been transformed and so you're living under just condemnation for your sin and you're living as a slave to the passions of your flesh.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of a young man who dishonored his father and ran away and squandered his whole inheritance in reckless living. And when he had spent everything he found himself working in the field with the pigs wondering if he could eat the food the pigs were being fed. The lowest of lows. Then it says, "he came to himself" and thought he might be able to go back and just work as a servant in his father's house. So he goes back to his Father's house in shame, expecting to be condemned but hoping to at least be fed. But, as Jesus tells it, while he was still a long way off his father saw him and felt compassion and ran to embrace him and kissed him. And the Father said to his servants, go prepare a feast for my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate.

Some of you think that even if you acknowledged your need for a savior and believed the gospel, you'd still only be a slave in the house of God. But friends, Jesus is telling you - if you will trust in me to make you right with God there isn't just a life of *less* condemnation available. It's a life of no condemnation in Christ, unreservedly welcomed, unreservedly loved, unreservedly delighted in... through Jesus. A life aimed at freedom in Christ.

Some of you are followers of Jesus, but you are living as if you are condemned and enslaved. Stuck in patterns of sin, overcome by shame, living in fear. First of all, you need to hear that God isn't done with you and he will complete the work he's begun in you! And you need to see this text as the foundation of your life so that you might have hope rekindled that there is more available to you in Christ than this half-life you're living!

If there is no condemnation in Christ, that means you and I can confess our sin with courage. No matter what kind of condemnation I think dragging my sin out into the light will bring on me, the God of the universe says, "no condemnation" so I can drag my sin out into the light. And since we've been set free in Christ from the power of sin and death, that means I've been given the resources to fight the good fight of faith, shield to shield with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

If there is no condemnation in Christ, that means that God is for us, and if God is for us - who can be against us? Is there any tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword that could make us not right with God again? And if we're immovably right with God, can anything truly take away our courage, or our joy?

Christian, abundant life of following Jesus has its roots in truths like these! It's out of "therefore, no condemnation, but freedom in Christ" that you can be let loose to run with joyful endurance, with your eyes on Jesus, taking the gospel to your homes and your families and your neighborhoods. We have to build our life on this! And we have to build our church on this!