

No condemnation

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[0 : 00] We may now turn to the portion read in the Epistle to the Romans.

At the beginning of the eighth chapter, there is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and false sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. And these words are there in the opening of this chapter are words which are of great consolation to the people of God and have always been.

A consolation to the children of God, I say, in every age. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

[1 : 41] And, of course, when the child of God is conscious of his own sinfulness and is conscious of his sinfulness in the light of God's law, for there is no other type of consciousness or conviction of sin but in the light of God's law.

For it is indeed the transgression of the law or lack of conformity. And to speak of sin without any relation to the law is meaningless.

So when the child of God may and very well may consider his sinfulness as he should and consider it in the light of the demands the very great demands of God's law for perfection for fulfillment and not only that but the demands of the law by way of penalty for sin.

It is a consolation that gives comfort and gives hope to such a passion to be able to dwell by faith on these words that is there for now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

Indeed, the child of God may say that it doesn't make sense for a passion who is sinful and every sin deserve of God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come and for a passion who is sinful and sinning being able to entertain the hope and that hope through faith in God's word that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

[3 : 57] And of course it is not a hope based on a negative doctrine that the condemnation is missing. There is far more than that.

It brings in what we were speaking of last night of the great doctrine of justification by faith. But it brings in more than that.

It brings in the doctrine of holiness or sanctification people's nature being transformed by the spirit of God.

Now as I said last night I'm not telling you something that you do not know already. I'm just reminding ourselves of things that we do know things that we believe are in accord with God's word.

We know that justification doesn't change anyone's nature. Justification doesn't change our nature at all. And adoption doesn't change our nature.

[4 : 59] But sanctification as you remember from the Shorted Catechism is not considered as an act but as the work of God's spirit. And so this sanctification which is the work of God's spirit is something that transforms our nature and takes its rise from the very act of regeneration by which our passion is brought to life by the spirit of God.

I know these doctrines are in your eyes elementary but they are very, very important. They are the doctrines confused by the medieval church and continue to be confused by the Roman church caused much confusion and error and indeed so much error that people were not able to find that joy in the Holy Ghost that has been promised to the church of God.

See, the Roman church doesn't believe that anyone can be assured of his salvation in his life because they have mixed the doctrine of justification with the doctrine of sanctification and it is only when a person is fully sanctified that he can be assured of his salvation.

When a person is fully sanctified, when a person is fully holy, conformed to what God requires of him, that's one, that's, and only then that he can be assured of his salvation.

Now we know how in the wonderful providence of God the doctrine of justification by faith burst out on the Western world and the then Western world and how that doctrine brought such a wonderful manifestation of God's blessings upon its preaching and gave such joy comfort and comfort and confidence and strength to those who rested by faith in the finished work of the Redeemer.

[7 : 21] But that does not mean for one moment that these people decried or that they belittled the doctrine of sanctification.

They didn't say, well, we believe in Christ, he is our merit, he is our savior, he is the end of the law for righteousness, then we don't need to worry how we live.

We don't need to worry whether we are holy or otherwise because we do not rest in our own holiness. We do not rest in our own works. Therefore, we can do as we please because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to us.

No, not at all. That would be a contradiction and that would be absolutely self-defeating because while they distinguish these doctrines, they never did separate them.

There are things which have to be distinguished and if they are not distinguished, they result in confusion. But there are other things, though they are distinguished and they must be distinguished, must not be separated or if they are separated, they become as nothing.

[8 : 37] we destroy the very doctrines that we preach. So while we were last night speaking of this doctrine that doesn't change our nature, we are speaking here this evening on a doctrine referring to the change that takes place in the heart in a person who is just before God.

And we are told here that after all that he has said, no doubt referring to what he has said in the seventh chapter and in the sixth chapter, there is therefore no, no condemnation, no condemnation at all to them to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Now if you look down to the fourth verse, you find the same words, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. And in some manuscripts as you know, the words are only in the fourth verse.

But by that is it me. What I would like to say is that the statement in the first part of the first verse does not, is not conditioned on the last clause that is there.

It does not depend on that. It doesn't say there is there for now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus if they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

[10 : 19] It doesn't say that at all. It says there is no no condemnation to them and as it was said and they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Now let us not close our eyes to the teachings that we have after this of the exhortations given to the people of God that they mortify the deeds of the body and so on and the exhortation given concerning the quenching and the grieving of the Holy Spirit.

But despite all that the statement that is given here is not dependent on on these last words it is only a statement after which these last words must come anyway.

There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus and they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. Now when we speak of condemnation as a rule we speak of that the passion is not that the guilt has been taken away because you cannot separate condemnation and guilt.

You can separate it in practice when there is a an aberration in the process of law but you can't clearly separate condemnation and guilt where there is guilt there has to be condemnation.

[12 : 12] Once guilt is established condemnation must follow it. Now the only way in which condemnation is taken away is by the guilt itself being taken away.

Now that is part of what we were speaking of last night but there is more than that and more than that here and that is that there is here the power of sin itself.

Not only the guilt but the power of sin and no doubt that is what is thrust into focus here is that the power of sin is broken is taken away and taken away by God in the act of condemning sin in the flesh to which we shall come later.

It is not enough that guilt be taken away but that the power of sin be broken. The power of sin be broken in the heart. That is why it is of no avail for you or for me to go around saying well I believe in Christ I am saved and showing forth no fruit of the spirit.

That would be meaningless. That is what is termed presumption. That is not faith. It is not assurance. It is not conversion.

[13 : 51] For here the apostle speaking of the power of sin broken in heart. Now we see first of all the immediate means by which this is effected.

And it tells us what happened in his own particular case. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus have made me free from the law of sin and death.

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Always in Christ there is the law of the spirit of life.

Made me free from this law of sin. Now if the law of sin is that which is referred to further down in the seventh chapter where it mentions I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

It's that the law speaks of. And that law of sin and the power of sin is always unto death death.

[15 : 20] Now whatever else is implied here and there may be much more implied than this this surely is brought to the fore anyway that it is the law of sin working in his members.

We must not confine the concept of law here to the law as a legislative authority a law that is a legislation that requires obedience we must rather consider it in the light of the context in the seventh chapter where we see it also as a regulated power regulating a forceful power in our mind and we call it a law the law of sin and it didn't matter what the apostle did he couldn't deliver himself from this it says in the well we read there it says in the ninth in the tenth verse and the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death and in the ninth verse it says for I was alive without the law once that when the commandment came sin revived and I died when the commandment came and that valid came has far more force here than the ordinary word which we when we refer to someone arriving someone coming that we expected there is much more force to it than that it is more like the coming of a storm the gathering of a cloud or a storm that you can't hold back something that is forcefully coming upon you and whatever you do you can't keep it back before apparently however the psalmist

Paul knew the law of God it wasn't coming near him isn't that a solemn thought that a patient could know the law of God very well and it didn't bother him he could explain it to others but it wasn't coming near him but he said when this commandment started coming near and I was absolutely incapable of keeping it away then the whole thing changed he died now what what does he mean by the law of the spirit of life the spirit of life in Christ Jesus the spirit that was given by God the spirit of God doesn't come to dwell in the heart of the unregenerate and live in his deadness when the spirit of God comes there is life and it only comes in Christ Jesus it is only in union with

Christ there is no way of receiving the spirit of God without receiving Christ there is no way of having the spirit of God without trusting in Christ and that these words that I'm using trusting and receiving I am changing them deliberately because any of you who read closely the shorted catechism and the larger catechism and the Westminster confession will find there the difficulty the composers or compilers of those articles found in trying to describe in scriptural terms the relationship of a sinner to the saviour at one at one place they describe it in this way embrace Jesus Christ trying to verbalize it in a manner that would do justice to the revelation and to the emphasis of revelation which God has given now this regulating power of the spirit of life he was delivered from from this thralldom from this slavery now how was the slavery manifested how was the slavery to sin manifested or revealed in my heart and mind as a sinner and regenerate surely it is in my understanding as a darkened understanding darkened understanding

I know that some people resent speaking like this because when we say some people and regenerate who have brilliant minds people would say are you telling me that that passion is darkened in his understanding certainly every young regenerate passion is darkened in his understanding and what is needed then in order to save from the darkness of the understanding is light or enlightenment and that's exactly the term that is used with regard to the power of God's grace the power of God's spirit in Christ Jesus in delivering a person's mind from the darkness you remember the words so plainly and so specifically given enlightening your minds now when the mind is enlightened it isn't enlightened in a vacuum it is not as if as if enlightened and looking for an object that's not how a person is freed at all from the law of sin and death he is not just enlightened and looking to see if he can't see anything but thus it is in the catechism enlightening your mind in the knowledge with all that the word knowledge and some of you know the richness and fullness how pregnant that word is with many the knowledge in the knowledge of Christ in the knowledge of Christ so that is how his mind was freed in his own consciousness and I believe that he's speaking now here of something of which he was conscious of which he was conscious at the great time of this radical change that took place in his own history and of course we have ample proof that that change took place the man who could say that he considered that it should be much many things contrary to

[22 : 19] Jesus of Nazareth this is the man we find afterwards saying that he was a slave of Christ he was a servant in bonds and he rejoiced being a servant of the man of Galilee whom he had despised before and when we speak of the will of man some of you have read Luther's wonderful treatise on the bondage of the will and you've read other men speaking or writing on that subject as well the bondage of the will of man and it doesn't matter how the will of man operates it doesn't matter how strong the will is it can't get past the barrier which the law of God has placed around the mind of man in his unregenerate state because the strength of the law the strength of sin is the law the law of God he locks the sinner in his prison he imprisons the sinner and he keeps the sinner in his inability this is part of the punishment that came on account of sin and the will of man of course man will say to you well I do just as I please well do you really a hungry generous sinner doesn't do as he pleases he thinks he does and in a certain sense he does because he doesn't please to do any more than he does but he actually he is bound not only in his will but in his placing he is bound by the bounds of thralldom and of imprisonment and of enslavement and so the will of man certainly certainly is active but the will of man is in bondage and so when Paul speaks here of the law of the spirit of life the spirit of life that has come and enlightened my mind is the very spirit now that renews my will so that

I am not only made willing but there is more than that far more I am not only made willing to do something I am unable to do it to receive Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel does this not strike a chord in your own heart if you know anything of the power that has come by the the law of the spirit of life this is what he does the spirit of life in Christ Jesus no prayers he works in this way so this is the immediate means by which the apostle and others have been brought into this situation where there is no no condemnation the power of sin has been broken in the heart and it doesn't matter what the devil does it doesn't matter what the flesh does it doesn't matter what the world does this can never be mended it can never be what it was before it has been broken forever the power of sin the very vertical column of the power of sin it has been broken and the spinal cord severed and it can never again be mended be put right in the in the sense in which it was before and this is the triumph of Christ in the sinner's heart in the sinner's life his mind is enlightened his heart his will is renewed and he is made able and willing to receive

Jesus Christ and whatever type of psychology we have we could go over the various types of psychology that considers man from various aspects but the conscience of man his affections and his heart they are all they are all coming under this freedom this is a passion set free not what we were speaking about last night the status of the man but this is something that happens within the heart of man but someone says to me but I am plagued with my own sinfulness I am plagued with my own inconsistencies yes indeed and you should confess them freely to God and forsake them and seek grace daily to live unto him and utter unto yourself but don't you realize that that is the very indication that the power of sin has been broken in your heart see there is a new concept of holiness among many people and always had it was always prevalent somewhere but it is prevalent even among ourselves today because of the of the attraction of this kind of doctrine of holiness that a person who is really holy is a person who has overcome all kinds of sin and is not boggled by sin anymore that is that is that is proceeding on this higher level well I don't find that that is supported in scripture at all the level on which the christian is proceeding is high indeed is as high as the heavens it's in christ but he is also the man who is mortifying the deeds of the body mortifying the deeds of the body and the tense of the wear of juice there signifies very clearly that it is not a person who goes out and kills everything in sight and comes home with a great sense of relief that he has attained victory that he doesn't need to go out anymore not at all it's a person who has goes out day after day there are much more to be many more to be mortified day after day this is indeed indicative of the power of the spirit of the spirit of life in christ jesus that will not let us go so that then is the immediate means of this freedom of this being freed from the condemnation there is no more condemnation not any not condemnation from any aspect you remember in the gospel of john we are told that the judgment of this world has come and what happens you remember in the gospel of john we are told that the judgment of this world has come and what happens when we speak of judgment very often we speak of the declaration of a verdict a verdict made known but there is also this meaning in john that the judgment declared is also executed it's effected and that is told in these words that the prince of this world is cast out by the very judgment and this is the condemnation that is no doubt foremost in this in these verses that the power of sin has been broken by the judgment

of god upon sin which is spoken of in the in the third verse in the third verse and that brings us to the real basis of what we have in the first the immediate means but then the more remote basis for this for what the law could not do in that it was weighed through the flesh the law could not do what was it that the law couldn't do when you say it couldn't justify well I don't know if that's right the law will justify for pressure's right the law will always justify the righteous but it says here but you say but it it only says what the law could not do in that it was weighed through the flesh but saying that it that it couldn't justify I think it's in line with the context because it says here that

God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and false sin condemns sin in the flesh this is what the law could not do and that it was weighed through the flesh the law of God condemning the sinner could never break the power of sin in the heart the sinner the sinner lost forever doesn't get any better in hell by being there forever so that the law condemning God condemning the sinner does not break the power of sin in the person who is condemned and this is where the law was weak through the flesh because it was dealing with sinful flesh and it doesn't matter how much that sinful flesh is condemned it will not break its power just think of what Christ has done for you it doesn't matter how much you would try if you would endure condemnation for a thousand years that would break the power of sin indeed we know that it's the other way about that it worked in me says the apostle all kinds of concupiscence and by the way that word itself is very interesting it's a sin that is not recognized by the Roman church and it's a sin that is very much going into the background with ourselves but Paul did not consider it to be such a neutrality at all but a very definite sin it worked in me all kinds of concupiscence the law working that why because he was sinful and the law was weak to break it was impotent it could not break the power of sin it wasn't weak to condemn it wasn't weak at all to condemn but it was weak to break you couldn't break the power of sin in the heart because it was sinful flesh but he said

[34 : 03] God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh he came for this purpose and this is your hope and mine as you go tomorrow to remember his death you go to remember his death and you say well I could not God could not break the power of sin in my heart even if I were condemned forever that is not saying anything against God it's saying there's something in his favour but God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh he shows us how close he came to us identifying himself with his people identifying himself with sinners but it was in the likeness of sinful flesh and the wonder is that there was a flesh found in which there was no sin and it is this way that he having received or having accepted our sins he

God condemns sin in the flesh in the sinless flesh of his son in the sinless humanity of his own begotten son God broke the power of sin we do not know how this happened but we are told and there are certain verses in scripture that point to this very clearly how Christ made a show of them openly of the powers that were against the powers of sin the powers of darkness the judgment of this world had come and the prince of this world is cast out he has no more power in the territory which is possessed by Christ once a person comes into this relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ the power of sin is broken the power of sin is broken forever now I say it's a great consolation to the people of

God who are bowed down with their wretchedness with their unbelief with their own self aggrandizement with their own deceit and conceit and everything else you wish to name that the power of sin has been broken and that that that is a pledge that they shall be holy fully holy in Christ Jesus they are accepted in the beloved and the power of sin in the heart is broken and broken forever broken forever and it goes on to say concerning the result here for for they for the righteousness of the law or the design that the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us not that we would fulfill the righteousness of the law that whatever could be said in favor that is not what is said but that the righteousness of the law that which

God requires that which the will of God requires of us be fulfilled in us not that we fulfill it there is really much difference between them there is a difference of emphasis and there is a difference of approach and there is quite a difference really that this be fulfilled in us who in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit well these are the people who are in Christ Jesus once a person is in Christ he doesn't walk after the flesh anymore but you say that is really contradictory and very much against what you said last night and what others say too but this is true once a person is in Christ he doesn't walk after the flesh I say anymore you remember what Paul says to the Corinthians that he could not speak to them as spiritual but as to carnal that they were acting as if they were walking after the flesh but he doesn't say that they were but that this is really the way they were acting in the world and that they should be ashamed of themselves the way they were acting but those who are in

Christ are walking after the spirit this is the most basic force in their existence whatever else is found and much is found within the heart of the child of God but he is still he is still thriving and victorious in his savior the power of sin has been broken there is no no condemnation the condemnation rested on him and the power of sin has been broken in him in the wonderful act of God as he condemns sin in the sinless flesh of his own begotten son the field here is so wise and we have dealt with it so inadequately but we have dealt with it with a view of encouraging the children of God when they are plagued with their own sinfulness and their own unfitness their own unworthiness of course you'll always be unworthy don't think for one moment that you'll be worthy in heaven no you'll always be unworthy worthy is the lamb that was slain you won't be worthy never he is you'll be made neat you'll be made you'll be prepared for the place which

[40 : 02] God has prepared for you but strictly speaking it is only the lamb that is worthy and it is not on your own worth that you're coming but you may be at times afraid because of the power of unbelief and the darkness of your mind and the indifference of your heart wondering if the wound if the wound inflicted by the spirit of God on your own self-righteousness and your own wickedness and your own darkness afraid that that wound is healing but you need not be afraid that wound will never heal because the wound was inflicted as a fatal wound that is to destroy the power of sin the power of sin has been destroyed and the pledge that you have the indication that you have that the power of sin has been destroyed your very supplications before a throne of grace and you're cleaving into your saviour in your weakness and in your sense of sinfulness in your sense of inadequacy and your self-loathing in your desire to be conformed to him surely that is sufficient indication that whatever the homes of hell are doing and however much they bark and whatever the noises are within or without that the power of sin has been broken forever in your passion in your heart and in your soul now there is no condemnation and you tell me this have you ever found consolation in Christ afresh when you have found this condemnation no it doesn't matter how often you come to the saviour you can read this in it there is no condemnation there is no condemnation in the law there is but not in Christ and the law has been fulfilled in him so you come tomorrow to your saviour's table you come tomorrow to remember his death you come tomorrow in all your sinfulness and all your inadequacy and all your failures and all the sins that you have committed since you last partook of the sacrament and you come under the canopy of his grace and the power of sin broken in your soul and broken forever and that is no presumption that is the teaching of God's own precious word let us pray ever blessed one we confess before thee that our eyes are dark our minds are dark but even in the darkness of our mind we would see we would see the glory of our redeemer the glory of our saviour the lord Jesus we would see him as he has indeed taken away the power of sin god has taken that away for we would thank thee thy people would rather be poor and needy the way they are than to be amidst those whose mind is still darkened and the will still in bondage though we know that there is much darkness in our understanding and much bondage conscious to us in our will because our will is not only able to will that which is good but that also which is evil oh

who can deliver us thou art alone our saviour and as thy children come tomorrow remembering thy grace and thy love give them strength in their weakness to cast themselves upon thee and that the grace of confession and the grace of repentance and that it may indeed demonstrate the strength of their faith as they come into the presence of the Lord be with us we pray thee and forgive our sins amen