

Romans #16
Secure in the Love of God
Romans 8:14

One of the things that I realized early in my ministry is that so many of God's people live under a heavy burden of guilt because of his or her past. Why is it that so many Christians feel so badly about themselves? The answer is very complicated and very simple: at the core of every human being is the desire to be approved, to be liked. We often set our self-esteem on the opinions others have of us.

In addition to how we feel about the opinions of others, we often have a hard time believing that God could forgive us much less forget our sin. Part of their problem may be because others remind them of their past. But even more prevalent than that is, they just cannot forgive themselves.

With that thought in mind, we are going to look at the first few verses of Romans 8. Dwight L. Moody, the famed evangelist of yesteryear, said that he had rather live in the midst of Romans 8 than to have lived in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Satan got to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but he cannot get to the Christian who lives in the middle of Romans chapter 8. Romans 8 begins with no *condemnation* and ends with no *separation*.

Verse 1 begins like this, "There is, therefore..." The word "therefore" looks back to the struggle of Romans 7 where the apostle Paul says in verses 15-23, "I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things. I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. There is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me." This is the very same thing we have been told in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

Romans 7 is one of the most powerful statements about struggling with sin in the history of all literature. What makes it so powerful is, that Paul is providing us a glimpse into his own struggle.

When I think of the apostle Paul, I see him standing up and defending his faith in front of the Roman governors and even the emperor. I remember him on his great missionary journeys all over the Roman Empire. We have all listened to him as he instructs the churches to be faithful, and as he encourages Timothy and Titus to remain true to their calling. Probably most of us, in our mind, have Paul as a model for the man of God.

But when we come to the 7th chapter of Romans, we get a peek behind the eyes of the apostle, and he is a lot more human than we might have first thought. Romans 7:14-15, 18-19 gives us some insight into Paul's honesty concerning his struggle against the pull of the flesh and his tendency to get caught in the stranglehold of sin. This is not Paul talking about the way he used

to be before he became a Christian. This is Paul saying, "Just this morning, I found myself doing the very thing, that I vowed that I would never do again."

What is so awesome about the Word of God is that it never "sugarcoats" the truth. From Adam and Eve to Moses, Peter, or Paul (and all in between) the Bible reveals this amazing truth found in James 5:17 that they were men of "like passions as we are."

How many times a week could you just kick yourself for failing?

You try to be patient with your *kids* or your *spouse* or your *parents*, but in a flash you strike out and the words you say have done their damage before you even know it.

You thought you had broken the grip of that of some past *bondage*, but there was that one weak moment, and you listened to the whisper that told you, "It will be okay just this once," and now you feel like a failure.

A thousand times, and in a thousand different ways you have tried to live up to the standards that you know are right. But the truth of the matter is that we don't always deny the desires of the flesh! We don't always walk in victory over temptation! **We don't always do what we know to be God's will.** And the result is that we make dumb choices.

But what then? What is our standing before God when we come up short of his expectations for our lives? What if Jesus were to suddenly return for His church and find us out of God's will for our lives?

These are questions that have caused much discussion among believers down through the ages. So much so, that major denominations have been started because of the conclusions that have been drawn.

But what does God's Word have to say on this matter? The answer lies in the conclusion that Paul makes in Romans 7:24-8:2, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who 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 hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Paul admits that there is a struggle going on within every human being, and when we try to win on our own strength we often get pinned to the mat. But the greatness of the promise of God's grace is that even when we fail again, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is security in our relationship with God.

The promise is profound; "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Listen to the words of Jesus found in John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." If you have a personal relationship with Jesus, you do not need to fear God's wrath.

But why is that so? What does Jesus have to do with us being condemned or not? Because Jesus is the *barrier* between sin and me! **A just and holy law had been broken, but now it has been mended, because Jesus paid a price that I could not pay.** And because of that, we have been told in Hebrews 10:12, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down

on the right hand of God." And that leads us to the tremendous truth of Hebrews 7:25, "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." The word translated "uttermost" simply means, "once and forever."

But what about the Law? The answer to that is found in verses 34, "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 for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the unrighteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." **I think Paul simply meant that there was a time, when as an innocent child, he did not know sin.** Then in his everyday living he learned right from wrong, obedience from disobedience, lying from telling the truth. In other words, he became a *conscious* sinner, and at that moment he became dead in trespasses and sin.

That is the Law. Once more, let me remind you of Romans 5:20, "Moreover, the law entered, that the offense may abound." The law was never given to save anyone! **The Bible leaves no question about this matter.** Not one single sinner is all the history of the human race has ever been saved by keeping the law of God. That is the reason we have been told in Romans 3:19-20, "Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are."

But that is not the end of the story, as seen in verse 2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." **It is imperative that you and I realize that the law of God has not been done away with, but has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.** Remember, Romans 7:12 says, "Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." The key, then, still hinges around Jesus Christ! And it was He who, through His sinless life, fulfilled the law, as seen in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." That simply means that as believers, we are no longer under the curse of the law that brings *death*, but under the newness of the law of the Spirit that brings *life*!

Now, we need to be careful right here, because although we have been saved to live a life of freedom from the law, we still have a responsibility for living for Christ, as seen in Romans 6:15, "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." We are warned in the book of Jude 4 about turning the "grace of God into lasciviousness." **Although our salvation is an eternal matter with God, God has not relieved us from our responsibility of living a life that is pleasing to Him!**

And even when we fail to live up to that standard, God our loving Father does not turn His back on us.

In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son disregarded his father, and then disgraced himself in every possible way. Dr. Vernon McGee says, "Do you know the difference between the son in that pigpen and the pig? The difference is that no pig has ever said to himself, 'I will arise and go to my father.'" He is right, but a *child* can do that! **And when that dirty stinking boy came within eyesight of home, his dad was there to clean him up and throw him a party.** Paul wants to make sure that we understand that God is just as anxious to throw His arms around us. Why? **Because,** "There is, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."