Lent 4 Romans 8:1-10
March 22, 2020 387-410-355

It's Great To Be a Christian!

I. There is "no condemnation" for us in Jesus.

II. We have new life in the Spirit.

Dear Christian friends,

Think of how many people see God – see God as CONTROLLING and interfering in their lives. It's nice to have God **take care** of them but God doesn't need to be IN THEIR LIVES **24 hours** a day. God should be close enough to **help when needed** – LIKE RIGHT NOW with all that's going on – but otherwise God should be OUT OF SIGHT – minding HIS OWN BUSINESS, so to speak.

That's why this reading is **so refreshing**. Paul reminds us – IT'S GREAT TO BE A CHRISTIAN! **It's great** to be a Christian because 1)there is "no condemnation" for us **in Jesus** and 2)we have new life **in the Spirit**.

I. Theirs is "no condemnation" for us in Jesus.

To really treasure these verses we must know what **came before** them. In chapters 1-3 Paul HAMMERED HOME that ***"there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There is no one righteous, not even one."*** Then Paul unfolded that PRECIOUS GOSPEL of Jesus our Savior who has taken care of **everything** for us. FOR JESUS' SAKE God has forgiven **all** our sins. God has justified us – declared us **not guilty** of all our sins. Yes, ***"the wages of sin is death, but the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*** TRUSTING in Jesus we have God's forgiveness of all our sins and God's promise of eternal life in heaven the moment we die. In **chapter 6** Paul showed how IN BAPTISM God gave us NEW LIFE – made us His NEW PEOPLE.

In **chapter 7** Paul looked over his **new life** as a Christian. What did he see? His old sins kept POPPING UP in his **new** life! In chapter 7 Paul reveals that struggle that **goes on** in every Christian's heart – that DAY IN and day out battle between the **new man** – the **Christian** in us – and our **old** sinful nature.

Listen to Paul describe his Christian life. ***"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. What a wretched man I am!"***

Sound familiar? **How often** don't we tell God we're **sorry** – ask God to **forgive** us – promise God we **won't do** whatever again – and BEFORE YOU KNOW it we're doing it all over again! **It seems** everyone has a PET SIN – a particular weakness that **varies** from person to person. It may be gossiping about people – drinking too much – not being content with how **God's taking care** of us- worrying instead of **trusting** God's promises. Maybe it's the language we use – checking out pornography on the internet – carrying grudges instead of forgiving – not being very faithful in **worship** or **daily devotions**. WHATEVER the sin – we've asked God to forgive us SO MANY times and years later we're STILL STRUGGLING with it.

We can be PRETTY PATHETIC Christians. We may even wonder, "Am I STILL a Christian? But wait – WHAT MAKES **anyone** a Christian? Is it MY LIFE – that I've cleaned up my act? Then I'm definitely not a Christian! A **Christian** is a person who trusts in Jesus as his Savior – who looks to Jesus for **forgiveness** – **peace** with God – **eternal life** in heaven. TRUSTING in Jesus makes a person a Christian and IT'S SO GREAT **to be** a Christian!

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." WE look at ourselves and see **so much sin**. GOD looks at us and He sees NOTHING WRONG with us – not one thing! God

sees us **that way** because we are ***"in Christ Jesus"*** – we are Christians. WE'RE not perfect people but JESUS is the perfect Savior.

Paul explains, ***"What the law was unable to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did, when He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin. God condemned sin in HIS flesh*** (Jesus' body)***, so that the righteous decree of the law would be fully satisfied in US."***

God's law – those 10 Commandments – SHOW us the **kind** of life that pleases God but those commandments CAN'T SAVE us. We can't live up to them – we can't perfectly obey them. BY OURSELVES – **without Jesus** – God had good reasons to WALK OUT of our lives and condemn us to hell forever.

But look again what God did! Jesus – the **eternal Son** of God – came ***"in the likeness of sinful flesh."*** Jesus was born a TRUE MAN but without sin. Jesus took our place under God's law and took care of **everything** for us. We owed God perfect love and obedience – that's exactly the life Jesus lived for us. Jesus fulfilled ***"the righteous requirements"*** of God's law and He gives us **all the credit** for it. Then God condemned our sin – NOT by punishing us but by **punishing Jesus** IN OUR PLACE. Jesus personally paid for **all** our sins with His **own innocent sufferings** and death on the cross.

In other words God HAS FORGIVEN **all** our sins **for Jesus' sake**. Our sins have been washed away in Jesus' blood. Trusting in Jesus we've BEEN CLOTHED with His holy life. As people who trust in Jesus GOD SEES ***"nothing to condemn"*** in us. Oh, IT'S GREAT to be a Christian!

Mind you – God DIDN'T SAY no pain – no problems – no headaches – no **struggles**. God never promised us that. But IN ALL THE UPS and downs of life we have the assurance AS CHRISTIANS ***"there is now no condemnation."*** The rest of our lives may BE MESS but **everything** is OK between God and us.

God wants us AS CHRISTIANS to live our daily lives CONFIDENT that ***"there is now no condemnation."*** AS CHRISTIANS we can die confident that we are going straight to heaven because ***"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*** It's SO GREAT to be a Christian!

II. We have new life in the Spirit.

Some see **being a Christian** as a BUMMER. You lose your freedom and FUN. You can't do this – you can't do that. God BOSSES US around in every area of our lives. Many would argue, GREAT to be a Christian? You've got to BE KIDDING!"

Paul says take another look. MAKE SURE you see the whole picture. There's no reason to ENVY the **unbeliever**. It IS GREAT to be a Christian. Paul makes that clear BY CONTRASTING the lives of the **Christian** and the **unbeliever** – our OLD LIFE without Jesus and our NEW LIFE with Jesus.

"Those who live according to the sinful flesh have their minds set on what the sinful flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

The sinful nature has its ***"mind set"*** on sinning! TAKE ANY commandment and the sinful nature wants the exact opposite. God comes FIRST in my life – NO, I come first! I'm to watch my language and how I use God's name – I'll TALK HOWEVER I want to. Gladly hear and learn God's Word – BORING! Obey my parents - they don't know what they're talking about. Love my neighbor – he's a JERK! Live a pure and **decent** life – GET REAL! So it goes with **every** commandment.

LOOK SOME MORE Paul says. ***"The way the sinful flesh thinks results in death."*** We can't separate sin and death. Sin has its CONSEQUENCES. Sometimes it's **already** IN THIS LIFE. Gossip

and people **won't tell** you things. LIE and people won't trust you. Sin only messes up our lives and leads us AWAY from God and DOWN to hell. What's SO GREAT about that?

There's more. ***"The mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God."*** The sinful nature sees God as the ENEMY. The unbeliever – ***"those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."*** Oh, OUTWARDLY the unbeliever may look like a GOOD, DECENT person. **Sadly** unbelievers sometimes live BETTER OUTWARD lives than those who call themselves Christians. But God doesn't want ONLY OUTWARD obedience. God's law calls for **all** to ***"LOVE the Lord your God"*** and the sinful nature hates God.

That includes the **sinful nature** living within EACH ONE of us. MY sinful nature – YOUR sinful nature – sees God as the **problem**. My sinful nature can't stand GOD TELLING me **what to believe** or **how to live**. That sinful nature bucks us EVERY DAY of our lives **as Christians**. But it's SO GREAT to be a Christian! We have NEW LIFE **in the Spirit**. ***"But you are not in the sinful flesh but in the spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you."*** The Holy Spirit brought us to faith in Jesus. THROUGH the gospel the Spirit made us alive in Jesus – made us Christians – a ***"new creation."***

But it doesn't stop there. The Spirit doesn't DROP BY – make us Christians and then MOVE ON. He ***"lives in us"*** - literally He MAKES HIS HOME in us. Every day – **through the gospel** – the Holy Spirit keeps us Christians and helps us live as Christians. **Every day** that sinful nature in us ACTS UP and the Holy Spirit is right there to HELP US FIGHT the ***"good fight of faith."***

That daily struggle with our sinful natures is a PROOF that **we are** Christians. IF we **weren't Christians** we wouldn't care if our LIVES PLEASED God or not. But as Christians we DO CARE about living lives ***"pleasing"*** to God. With the SPIRIT'S HELP we struggle **every day** to ***"please God"*** in ALL we say – do – think. Oh, we're still far **from perfect** but AS CHRISTIANS we have the assurance that ***"there is now no condemnation"*** for us. That daily forgiveness in Jesus' blood gives us NEW ENERGY – new STRENGTH – to go out and live for our Lord Jesus.

It IS GREAT to be a Christian! Let people see that in you. **As Christians** were not perfect but we have the PERFECT SAVIOR. That's what makes it SO GREAT to **be a Christian**! Amen.