

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

JUNE 6 - 10, 2022

LIFE  
IN THE  
SPIRIT

Pentecost 2022

# MONDAY

Read **Romans 8:1-4**

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## No Condemnation

Paul's letter to the Romans is arguably his finest explanation of the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Chapter 8 follows on Paul's admission of his own inner struggle to do what is right as he confesses:

*“So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:21-25)*

Despite his inner struggles, Paul places his confidence in Jesus' saving work on his behalf and the Spirit's work within him when he affirms, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1)*. Consider this statement in the context of Paul's personal faith journey:

- No condemnation for one who had persecuted God's people.
- No condemnation for the self-proclaimed “worst of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).
- No condemnation for the “wretched man” who struggled to apply what he *knew* to be right.

What does “no condemnation” mean within the context of our stories? God offers us no condemnation in Jesus Christ regardless of our past sins, regardless of our regrets, regardless of those things for which we may still feel guilt or shame. This judgment of “no condemnation” is not simply God arbitrarily deciding not to impose on us the punishment we justly deserve. Rather, it is the recognition that the punishment each of us deserves has been born by Jesus Christ in His death on the cross. That is why Paul indicates that the freedom from condemnation is “for those who are in Christ Jesus.” By His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus bore the consequences for our sins to free us from the condemnation we deserved. This indeed is the gospel, the *good news* of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

## QUESTIONS

Have you accepted Jesus’ gracious salvation by putting your faith in Him? How does being a recipient of God’s grace affect the way you view and treat others in need of grace?

## PRAYERS

**For World Vision Team in Baba, Ecuador**

Please ask the Lord to bless our World Vision team in Baba, Ecuador, with wisdom, skill, and patience as they invest resources from Glenkirk to improve the living conditions for all community members, youngest to oldest.

# TUESDAY

Read **Romans 8:1-4**

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## Free from the Law of Sin and Death

Yesterday's devotional focused on the marvelous declaration by Paul that *"there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). That freedom from condemnation is grounded in the death of Jesus on the cross, but Paul gives a further basis for it in verse 2: *"... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."* Paul identifies two contrasting laws in this text: (1) the law of the Spirit who gives life and (2) the law of sin and death.

While biblical scholars debate exactly what Paul meant by his use of "law" in this verse, the most helpful interpretation is that he is NOT referring to the Old Testament law (the Torah) but using "law" as we might use it for "principle," as in the laws of democracy or capitalism. Paul argues that based on the principle of sin and death, all of us would deserve condemnation. But the Spirit who gives life (the opposite of death) has set us free from the principle of sin and death.

So, what exactly does the law of sin and death entail? It likely includes these ideas:

- Humans have a sinful nature that makes sin our natural behavior. Few of us need much encouragement to sin. We can all find ways

to sin without blaming the devil or others. James put it this way: *“Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed”* (James 1:14).

- Sin naturally leads to death. The inevitable relationship between these two was underscored by God in the Garden of Eden. His instructions to Adam and Even were: *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die”* (Genesis 2:16-17).

The good news is that the life-giving Spirit of God has set us free from both the inevitability of our own sinfulness and the finality of physical death. While the Spirit does not prevent us from ever sinning again, we are given the ability to resist temptation and sin when we choose to follow the Spirit’s lead.

## **QUESTIONS**

What steps do we take daily to follow the Spirit who gives life and delivers us from sin and death?

## **PRAYERS**

**For World Vision Team in Baba, Ecuador**

May the Lord bless the farmers of Baba with good weather and wise tactics for growing abundant, healthy crops and then guide these growers in the best ways to reap the reward for their labor.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **Romans 8:1-4**

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## The Powerless Law

Paul continues his argument by stating, *“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh ...”* (Romans 8:3). In this verse the law Paul has in mind is clearly the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment in the law, He summed up the whole of the Torah in the two commandments, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”* and *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:37-39). Make no mistake: Paul does not think less of the law than Jesus. Elsewhere he described the law as holy, spiritual, and good (Romans 7:12-16). Paul’s point is that as holy, spiritual, and good as the law is, it is still unable to make us holy, spiritual, and good.

Perhaps an analogy would be helpful. Most of us would probably agree that speed limit signs on our roads and highways are good. I doubt many of us would describe them as holy or spiritual, but let’s stick with the idea that such laws are good. As good as speed limit signs are, do they prevent people from speeding? Perhaps they keep our speeding from becoming excessive (we may think, “75 MPH in a 65 MPH zone is okay, but not 95 MPH”), but in and of themselves speed limits are

powerless to make people comply. We exceed the speed limit not because they are bad laws but because our own inner person rationalizes why such rules do not apply to us.

In a similar manner Paul argues that God's law—as good as it is—does not have the power to make us good or righteous in God's sight. That is not its function. Rather, its function is to set the standard, so we know what holy, spiritual, and good look like. Paul states that the law was powerless “*because it was weakened by the flesh.*” Our sinful desires weaken the law by treating the law as an opportunity to exercise our own autonomy over God's desire for our lives. In this way the law is robbed of its power to live according to God's standards.

## QUESTIONS

How does our sinful nature respond to the things we know God wants us to do (or not do)? How can we avoid allowing our sinful nature full control?

## PRAYERS

**For World Vision Team in Baba, Ecuador**

May the Lord bless the mothers and homemakers of Baba as they learn how best to nurture their children's growth through healthy nourishment for their bodies but also with nourishment for their souls.

# THURSDAY

Read Romans 8:1-4

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## God's Brilliant Solution

*“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering”* (Romans 8:3). Recognizing the powerlessness of the law to save humankind, God took the initiative to bring about salvation Himself. God's plan was brilliant in its profound humility, selflessness, and logic.

Firstly, the humility. The triune God's solution required the Father to send His Son to earth *“in the likeness of sinful flesh.”* Paul is careful to say that the Son came *“in the likeness of sinful flesh,”* not simply *“in sinful flesh”* to avoid any implication that Jesus was guilty of sin. The point he is making is that the divine Son became human, something he explains elsewhere by saying that Jesus Christ *“made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness”* (Philippians 2:7). But can you imagine the inner turmoil of the Holy One living in the midst of human sin and evil? It would be like a self-professed cleanness fanatic having to walk through a barnyard ankle deep in manure—barefoot!

Secondly, the selflessness. God the Father chose to send His own Son and the Son chose not only to become human, but to suffer a cruel death as a sin offering. Such action by the Father shows



His willingness to suffer the separation from and eventual death of His Son, for the sake of His wayward people. Such action by the Son shows His willingness to set aside His own divine prerogatives, even His own experience of oneness with the Father, in order to put the needs of humankind ahead of His own pleasure.

Finally, the logic. God's solution was that the Son would become a "sin offering," thereby satisfying the holy, spiritual, and good demands of the law. The writer of Hebrews, referring to Jesus as a priest, explains it this way: *"But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God ... For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy"* (Hebrews 10:12-14). So, what the law was powerless to do, to save humankind, God Himself did. What a brilliant solution.

## **QUESTIONS**

How can we live a life of gratitude for God's wondrous gift of salvation?

## **PRAYERS**

**For World Vision Team in Baba, Ecuador**

Let's ask the Lord to bless the children of Baba with an eagerness to learn, with a healthy curiosity about the world of nature and the God who created it. May they see, by faith, His loving care for them.

# FRIDAY

Read **Romans 8:1-4**

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## Living According to the Spirit

Paul explains the purpose of God's salvation in the final sentence of this section: *"And so He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"* (Romans 8:3b-4). In the first verse of this chapter, Paul declared no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. But he has now come full circle to say that there is condemnation—not of people, however, but of sin. By condemning *"sin in the flesh"* through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, God makes it possible for the righteous requirement of the law to be fully met in us.

By making such a statement, Paul seems to have two things in mind. On the one hand, it is Jesus' death that fulfills the righteous requirement of the law for us. It was because of His sacrifice that we are free from condemnation. On the other hand, the righteous requirement of the law is fully met in us when we live according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh. The Spirit of God cannot lead us in sinful paths but only in those paths that fulfill God's righteous requirements. So, if we live according to the Spirit, we enjoy freedom from a life of sin.

Does this mean that believers who live according to the Spirit can live perfect lives? Theoretically, perhaps, but none achieves such perfection this side of heaven. We all continue to battle our sinful nature daily and repeatedly choose to live according to the flesh rather than according to the Spirit. This is simply part of our fallen humanness. But the Spirit gives us hope, showing us the possibility and at times the reality of living in a way that pleases God.

The tension between accepting what Christ has done for us on the cross to liberate us from the power of sin and choosing to follow the Spirit's leading to experience freedom from sin is a positive reminder that we are not yet all God wants us to be. Hopefully, this tension is a daily reality for us as we seek to follow the Spirit's guidance and live in the freedom God has given us.

## **QUESTIONS**

When do you experience the greatest difficulty following the Spirit?  
What would help you do so more consistently?

## **PRAYERS**

**For World Vision Team in Baba, Ecuador**

May the Lord raise up a vibrant fellowship of Christian believers in Baba to serve as a witness and a blessing to their entire community so that many more men, women, and children will come to know and trust Jesus.

## Sources

- These devotionals owe much to Darrell Johnston's *Experiencing the Trinity: Living in the Relationship at the Centre of the Universe* (Vancouver: Canadian Church Leaders Network, 2021).

