

**SAFE AND SECURE  
NO CONDEMNATION**

**Romans 8:1-4**

We begin today a series on the topic of living securely in an unsafe world. We will spend the next seven weeks, including today, in Romans chapter 8. Today we lay a foundation in the first four verses. Please follow along as I read.

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

**This passage of Scripture -- Romans chapter 8 -- everything about it is constructed to surround you and to convince you that there is absolute security in Jesus Christ.** The Puritans would have said that the real theological theme of Romans 8 is **assurance** – that by the Spirit of God you can have a great confidence, an assurance that you belong to God and that your sin is forgiven, that there is a place of conviction and security. I am using the word security, really as a synonym here for assurance. You could see it also as a fruit of assurance -- that there is complete security in Christ.

Think in terms of two kinds of security: 1) **internal security** -- emotional, psychological well-being and security, and then 2) **external security** – circumstances. You know, you go to buy insurance for your property and ask the insurance agent what's covered. He says you need insurance because you might have a fire. Well I don't want a fire. You might have a flood. Thieves might break in. All kinds of bad things could happen, so you need insurance. But not everything is covered, right? Well, what's not covered? Sinkholes are not covered. Do sinkholes happen in Florida? I mean, I'm feeling insecure the more we have this conversation. Oh yeah, terrorism is not covered.

There are external dangers in life. There are things beyond your control. Paul deals with all of it here in this chapter. What's fascinating is that he comes out of chapter 7 having described our condition as "very insecure." He looks at life without the Spirit of God, without the work of Christ, living, trying to keep God's law by our own strength. In verse 24 of chapter 7 he says, "Wretched man that I am!

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Who will deliver me from this body of death?" If that doesn't sound like an insecure person, I don't know what does. Just deliver me!

So we come to chapter 8, where the theme is one of great victory and great security. As we introduce this topic, I find that insecurity is a subject that we are somewhat uncomfortable with. We don't like to say, "I'm insecure." It's unbecoming. It's not something we want said about us. Sometimes I'll hear people say, "You know, that leader is insecure." It's not meant as a compliment, generally, that the person acts out of insecurity in a controlling or hurtful way.

But the reality is we all know what it is to deal with insecurity. We all know what it is to have that internal uneasiness, that things are not well or that they won't go right. You can think of it in terms of internal and external, but you can also think of it in chronological terms. You can think of it in terms of the past, the present, and the future. You can be insecure because of things that have happened in your past. You are full of regret and feel that you'll never get past that, and that that's always going to define you and always going to control you. You can deal with insecurity in the present moment. This is not going to go well. I don't look right. People don't like me. I will not get this job. I will lose this job. I might have to keep this job. Whatever it is, you battle feeling safe and secure in this very moment.

Then you look into the future. The unknown is there and you can deal with a deep insecurity in terms of the future. So Paul deals with internal, external, past, present, and future insecurity in this chapter. **It is an assault on insecurity. It is an all-out attack, showing us that in Jesus Christ there is a place of safety and great confidence in Christ.**

This is what I would like to try to do today. It's a little ambitious, but I want to try to provide a foundation in verses 1-4. **There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** Then I will give an overview of some of the ways that Paul addresses this comprehensive subject in dealing with insecurity. So, foundation and then an overview -- that's what we're going to try to do. Are you with me? Each is going to take about an hour, hour and a half, but it's New Year's so we've got lots of time, right? Let's bring in the New Year. See, you are all too insecure to say, "No! Don't preach for that long!"

Okay, let's start with the foundation. The foundation is significant because I'm going to give you seven messages, seven truths - each one dealing with insecurity from a different perspective. Each one brings security at you from the perspective of what God provides. The next six are built on this

foundation. You always return to this foundation. It's a little bit doctrinal in the sense that it lays out some important truths theologically, and it will help you so much if you get these as the right foundation for life, and for this study. So, let's dig into it. Four verses, four points.

### I. **There is no condemnation for me because I am in Christ.**

You can obviously only say that if you are in Christ. We will talk about that a little bit, but that is Paul's great statement. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." He is going to build everything in this chapter on that truth, on that platform, because **condemnation is the massive root which undergirds all insecurity, and it is removed only in Jesus Christ.**

So we stand in a place personally, where when we understand emotionally that insecurity is built on condemnation, we can delight in the fact that Jesus removes it. John Newton uses this image. He says to imagine a man walking in a very dangerous place. There are pits and perils all around, and it's dark. You shout at this man, "Hey, it's not safe. Don't walk any further. But the man says to you, "No, no, no, I'm fine. I'm fine, don't worry. I'm fine, there's no danger here. I'm fine, I've got this. Relax. I've got this."

When I read this illustration by Newton, I pictured the coast in Ireland. Many years ago, my wife and I were there with some of our kids. I don't remember which ones, but some of them were there, and they were small. We were running down the coastline, but it wasn't like a straight coastline. It was jagged. There was this massive drop to the water, to the sea, with rocks all along. Every now and then there would be a finger that would be cut out of the land - like a two-foot stretch that would come in about 10 or 15 feet. You would be walking along and all of a sudden you would come to this spot. You would look down, and it would go straight down to the rocks. Well, I have a fear of heights -- a very legitimate, sound fear of heights, and I just was petrified. My kids were running around and I was on edge the whole time.

Now, imagine you're in a place like that and it's pitch black. You can't see anything and you're just walking along. Newton says this is the condition of mankind. He's under condemnation. He's under the judgment of God. He or she stands in a place of spiritual danger. We have a debt before God because of our sin. We cannot pay it ourselves, and God will require it on judgment day. I know that that is a very unpopular message. But no matter how much the man goes along and says, "I'm fine;

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I've got it; everyone's out here doing this; it's okay," it does not change the reality that this person's life is in peril, and in this case, for all of eternity.

And, Newton says the only way to help that person is to come along with a light. That's what God's Spirit will do. You can speak the truth, but it is God's Spirit who comes and illumines. He says, "Look at your need. Look at the condition of your soul. Look at God and his holiness and what he will require." Something happens in that moment. The moment we become aware of that need and start to become convinced, there is an awareness that all of those defense mechanisms that we've built up to justify ourselves and explain – all of those kinds of things dissolve in the presence of God. We say, "Wow, I am really in need." Then the light of the gospel comes and God says, "I'm here to help you. I have sent my Son to pay the penalty for your sin so that condemnation can be removed in Jesus Christ." I have faith in Christ. I can have complete forgiveness. The light comes on. You see the danger, and you're saved in him. That is the foundation that Paul is laying in these verses.

I use that illustration from Newton because you might be here saying, "You know what? I deal with insecurity. I really want to hear some messages on how to overcome insecurity. I'll never admit that I'm insecure, but I really am insecure. I'm too insecure to admit that I'm insecure, but I want to learn how not to be insecure. But don't talk to me about judgment and condemnation." My message to you is, "I can't help you." Because until God's light shines and we say, "You know what? Underneath all of my fears and anxieties and insecurities is a judgment for sin, and all that's wrong with the world is a broken relationship with God that can only be healed in Christ," there is no resolution. **But there is a glorious resolution in Christ when we embrace his truth.**

So, #1 – in Christ there is absolutely no condemnation. Forgiveness – it's a gift. Now let's unpack it.

### II. **The law of the Spirit sets me free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** (verse 2)

We read this. "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." This is a little difficult to translate, to understand, but I'm confident that the word "law" here in both cases means principle or rule or power. It could read: "The power of the Spirit sets me free in Christ Jesus from the power of sin and death." The power of the Spirit, the principle of the Spirit, the rule of the Spirit sets me free in Christ Jesus from the principle of sin and death, from the law of sin and death.

We think, perhaps, of the illustration of the law of gravity and its power over us, and that we have to respect that. We live under that power. That's what Paul is talking about here. He is talking about how if we say, "Okay, Brian, you know what? This is a clever illustration that Newton used, but it's just emotionalism. I don't want to hear it. I reject that. If there is a God, the day will come when I will stand before him and I'll say, 'Listen, I'm a pretty good person. I've tried to do what's right.' I'll stand before him based on my own morality." Paul is saying here (and he has built all of this up in Romans 7) that if you try to relate to God based on your own goodness, then you are under the power of sin and death, and your own goodness will not be sufficient for you to break free.

In fact, he describes this in Romans 7. As you try to do that and you say, "You know what? I want to live this way," you will find yourself (and Paul describes it vividly in Romans 7) saying, "The very things I want to do I don't do, and the things I don't want to do I find myself doing."

So, we have encouraged you today – I think Adam did an excellent job of encouraging you to take advantage of New Year's and to step into New Year's. The challenge, of course, is that we don't always keep our New Year's resolutions, do we?

How many of you kept fully your resolutions from last year? How many of you are making the same resolutions this year that you made last year? Yeah, I need to lose the same 15 pounds. I don't know. I lost it and gained it seven or eight times in 2017. Right? There is a power that Paul is describing here. He uses the word "law" for an important reason. I have interpreted it here as principle or power or rule, but we see where he is going when we go to the third point in verse 3.

### **III. Jesus accomplishes for me what the law was powerless to do because of my sinful nature.**

Now I believe that the word "law" is the law of God. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh..." These four verses are so important and so foundational, and I think people get lost. They read it and think, "What in the world is Paul saying? He is saying, 'Okay, the law of the Spirit, the law of sin and death, and now the law is powerless.'"

So in verse 2, I am understanding law to mean principle or power; in verse 3 the law of God. Here is what he is saying. **The law is powerless to bring transformation in your life because of your own sin.** The law of God is right. It's true. It's written on your heart, according to Romans 2. It's written

in God's word. But it's powerless to bring about transformation in your life. Only grace, only God's gift, only Christ, only the Spirit of God at work in your life will bring that change.

Just so that we get this foundation built right, let's unpack this for a minute. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son (now this is an interesting phrase) in the likeness of sinful flesh." In the likeness of sinful flesh. Here is, I think, what we need to take away from this phrase. Jesus did not come in the likeness of flesh. He came in the flesh. He was not sort of human. He came, fully human, but he was sinless. So if you put the word "sinful" in there, then you have to say "likeness," because he didn't come in sinful flesh. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Do you understand? You're like, "No, I am so confused!"

He is sinless, so if we want to remove the word likeness we have to remove the word sinful. So why did he put it in there? Why did he want to say he came in the likeness of your sinful flesh? He never sinned as you and I have, but he really came in the flesh. He is saying that he came, took on your flesh, and your sin was placed upon him at the cross so that he could condemn sin in the flesh. Now, instead of you being under condemnation, your sin is condemned and removed in Jesus Christ. That is the foundation of how insecurity is defeated in your life. When you can say, "Boy, I have messed up in some places; I have sinned, but it's removed in Christ," that good news frees you to experience security in Christ.

#### **IV. The righteous requirements of the law are now fulfilled in me because I am in Christ and my life looks like it because I walk according to the Spirit.**

Verse 4: "...in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." This is what happens. When we come to a point of saying, "I want to trust in Christ. I no longer want to trust in myself. I turn from my sin and I turn to trust in Jesus and I'm going to follow him. I'm going to be a disciple (to use a biblical word) and I'm going to follow him. And I'm at a church that lays out four simple commitments. This is what life looks like following Jesus here: Gather, Connect, Serve, Grow. I'm saved, not because I'm making those commitments. I'm saved - it's a gift, I receive it by faith from Christ," my position with God in that moment changes. I am no longer guilty before God. I am no longer condemned. I am now set free in Jesus.

But now he makes an astounding claim in this verse. He is building that and he is building that on everything he has said in Romans 1-7. **When you become a Christian, when you are saved, your**

**standing before God changes.** But now he makes an astounding claim. **He says you are righteous before God, but now you are going to start to look like it, because you live by the Spirit and not by the law. You live a life according to the Spirit of God living in you.**

Rather than saying, “Okay, God, if I do good, you’ll accept me,” you say, “I didn’t do good, and my bad was put on Jesus. He paid the penalty. I receive it as a gift. Your Spirit is in me and now I live by the power of your Spirit as you lead me.” Then we begin to live out a life that reflects the righteousness of God.

Now let’s look at the overview. Seven parts, the first one is the foundation:

- I. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**
- II. Set your mind on the Spirit and you will have life and peace.**

He starts to introduce it in verse 4, but really unpacks it in verses 5-17. Verse 6. “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” Here’s what he is doing in this section. He is telling you what it looks like now to live a life in the security of God. It’s the Holy Spirit living in you, and you have to set your mind on the things of God. He continues in verse 13. We are just jumping through, getting a few highlights. “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Verse 15: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

Okay, let me see if I can explain this section. The Spirit of God comes in. He is the Spirit of adoption. And you know what he says to you? He says, “I love you. You have been adopted into the Father’s family. Not because of what you’ve done, but because of what Christ has done. Because of my choice of you, I have adopted you into my family. The Spirit lives within you, bearing witness over and over: You belong to the Father. I love you. I am pleased with you. I delight in you.”

In this section, this is what Paul says. He says, “Listen, if you will set your mind on the things of the Spirit, you will experience life and peace. You will daily, moment by moment, experience life and peace.” In the negative, that looks like you, by the Spirit of God, killing sin all the time, saying no to sin and fighting sin -- saying yes to the Spirit of God, saying no to sin.

Here is the best way I can translate it to you. The Puritans used to say that the conscience is God’s deputy. When you get saved, your conscience begins to experience renewal, and it’s there all the

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time, telling you right, wrong, do this, don't do this, don't say that. As you live with a clean conscience and obey the Spirit of God, you are cooperating with the work of the Spirit. He is always saying to you: I love you. But when you are constantly disobeying the Spirit of God and quenching the Spirit of God, you are quenching the voice of adoption in your life.

You are still there, you are still a part of the family. I think I've lost you. Let me illustrate. There is a Christian leader in town who speaks to large groups of people and he tells this story. One day he was sitting at a coffee shop with my dad, and as they were sitting there, a woman walked by. He stopped looking at my dad and he started looking at that woman. Then as only my dad can do, he said, "What are you doing looking at that woman?" Then he was in a situation of "Wow, was it that obvious?" So then my dad took him to buy a greeting card for his wife; he thought that would help him. And he talks about how my dad began to talk to him about renewing the mind.

I use that vivid illustration to say this. The believer -- if you're a man, put yourself in that position -- you are confronted with that 50, 100, 1,000 times a day, a week, whatever it is. And the Spirit of God is right there in you, saying, "No, don't do that. Don't take a second look there. Don't go there." It could be gossip. It could be unforgiveness. The Spirit of God is constantly saying, "Walk in this way, walk in this way, don't go there, no don't click on that, don't send that email. Yes, do this. Pick up the phone and call this person," constantly. The believer who sets his or her mind on the Spirit of God is cooperating with the Spirit of adoption.

Now, I believe that often you are saying, "Well, I fail all the time." Yes, well what's the foundation? **No condemnation for those who are in Christ.** So there you are. You would never do this, but you are there. Someone walks by. You look. You look a second time. You look a third time. You would never do that, right? Could someone say Amen? You with me? What do you do? "Oh, God will never...no, I'm not his son..." No, no, no. What's the foundation? **There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.**

I believe that many Christians live alienated in reality from God because they just believe their daily choices don't matter. They matter in terms of your personal experience of the Spirit of God. It's not works. It's grace. But the Spirit of God is constantly in you, trying to lead you to life. Okay, I'm preaching the second message before I can even get to the overview. The third one is this:

### **III. Respond to present difficulties with hope and patience.**

I've been meditating on this passage for the past several months. I had something break at my house and I thought, "I can fix this myself." That was my first mistake. I went out and tried to fix it and I was actually meditating on this passage. The glory of this passage is that we live in a fallen world. Things break. Physical things break, relationships break, we battle sin ourselves, per the second point, but also externally, life is coming at us. The job is not as easy as it should be. It's difficult. How do we respond?

Paul comes in now, talking about what we might classify as external insecurity. He says, "Listen, God's going to restore everything. He's going to make everything new. And you are going to be revealed as a son or a daughter of the Lord when he does! Here's what you're supposed to do right now. You are supposed to live in hope and patience. You don't fully see it, but here's how you respond to difficulty in this life: Hope and patience. Hope and patience. Hope and patience. And when you fail, you go back to the foundation. What's the foundation? **No condemnation.**

So don't be overcome when raising kids is difficult, when being married is difficult, when getting a job, keeping a job, finding meaning in work - all of those things disappoint you, because we live in a fallen world that's yet to be restored. But we live in hope and glory because we are going to be revealed as sons and daughters of God. That's the third point.

#### **IV. Embrace God's will for your life in prayer.**

In verses 26 and 27 he tells us we don't know how to pray as we ought. In fact, he literally says, "We don't know what to pray for." We pray the wrong things. We want things that God doesn't really want for us. And in these verses he says, "But, the Holy Spirit helps us." The Holy Spirit actually leads us, prays through us, helps us to pray for the things that we should pray for. Part of the beauty of this is we can want something, our ambition takes us to it, then God in his mercy shows us: "Wow, look over here. This is what I have for you." It's so much better submitting to the will of God.

#### **V. All things work together for good.**

Verse 28. In this verse, often quoted, Paul is telling us that God leads us towards a purpose and everything in our lives works according to that purpose, so that you can look back on your life, you can even look at the catastrophes, the sin, the failure, and see how God weaves it in for a purpose to your redemption story.

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My wife and I would say that years ago we struggled in our marriage. God did a miracle. She has never been happier, for many, many years now. The pain of that is a part of our redemption story. Because we know that we know that we know that our marriage is by God's grace. We know that our children are by God's grace.

I was visiting with a neighbor a few years ago and he was complimenting me. He was saying, "You know, your kids are just amazing. They are really spectacular." I said, "Well, you've only seen them in the highlight moments." But he was serious. He said, "What did you *do*?" I said, "Man, it's God's grace. I pray a lot!" It so caught me off guard I didn't know how in the moment to say, "Well, here's a formula: 1, 2, 3, 4." There are truths that we apply, but we know that we are agents of God's grace, right? That's our hope. The good and the bad all weave together as a part of your redemption story.

### **VI. Your final salvation is secure.**

God saves you. He does the saving, therefore you are secure. This deals with some sticky doctrines about predestination and in a practical way when we get here we will see why it does matter.

### **VII. Nothing can separate you from God's love.**

God is good. His actions toward you are good. The lie that the enemy brings to you -- that you're missing out, that if you really follow God and go with him with all your heart you are going to somehow miss out - it's a lie. **God will withhold no good thing from you. He has given you his Son and nothing can separate you from the love of God.**

So here is the idea we want to say as a summary from what we are doing today. Listen to this. The complete security which is mine in Jesus Christ is powerfully and personally proclaimed in my heart and is manifested in my life by the Holy Spirit. That's what Romans 8 is after. Let me see if I can help you understand this statement. I am completely secure if Jesus has saved me. And that security is powerfully proclaimed in my heart by the Spirit of God. It's also personally proclaimed, affectionately, intimately: "You are my child. I delight in you. I love you." So you don't go through Romans 8 with the thought of, "Okay, okay, I've got to do this. I've got to do this. I've got to do this." Yes, I step out in faith. But the Spirit of God is working in you, and embracing the full-orbed work of the Spirit is essential to knowing your security.

So listen, if you're here and you're not a charismatic, I don't have to turn you into a tongue-talking charismatic, although I might try if you give me time. But I do want to turn you into someone who

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embraces the work of the Holy Spirit! God is manifesting his love for you right now by the Spirit of God, saying to you, "You have purpose. Nothing is going to happen in your life apart from what I allow and I'm going to use it for my purpose. Even in your darkest moments I'm there with you and I'm using it for good. Trust me. Act in faith. Don't act out of fear and insecurity, because I am going to speak this truth in your heart over and over and over again." So that's the main truth, and the foundation is this: **Condemnation, which is the root of insecurity, is completely undercut in Christ.**

Now, I want to ask you to bow your head if you would and I'm going to close the service out. I just want to invite you to ask right now a simple question: Are you in Christ? Are you under condemnation?