

Easter 2026

There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation

April 5th, 2026

Romans 8:1-11

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Introduction:

Good morning, Redeemer. He is risen! He is risen indeed! Thank you, Wendy, for reading our passage for this morning.

There is a popular comedian – Nate Bargatze – who does a bit called ‘the worst time traveller’. He imagines going back to the 1920’s and talking to a man who’s using an old phone. “You know, one day they’re going to make these so small that you’ll be able to carry it with you in your pocket.” ‘Really! How will it work?!’ “Yeah. Hmm. I actually have no idea..” He summarizes the whole joke when he says: “If I went back in time knowing everything that I know now, I don’t think I’d make a difference.”

“This might just be the worst Easter sermon introduction I’ve ever heard...” Bear with me. I wonder if some of us don’t carry the good news of the gospel in the same way that the worst time traveller carried the ‘good news’ of the cell phone. ‘Something has happened! It’s amazing! Death has been defeated! ... Just don’t ask me *how*.’

How *does* it work, Christian?

2,000 years ago, Jesus died on a cross. Three days later he rose from the grave. Death has been defeated! And now, everything has changed! But HOW?

In our passage for this morning, the Apostle Paul answers that question. Look again at verse 2:

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2 ESV)

The word translated here as ‘law’ could also be translated as ‘dominion’ or ‘authority’. What he’s describing in our passage is how God has moved you *out* of one dominion – the dominion of *sin* and *death*, and into another – the dominion of *the Spirit* and *life*. As one commentator explains:

To become a Christian means to be transferred from the realm dominated by the flesh to the realm dominated by the Spirit.¹

For those of you who are visual learners, imagine these two hoops representing those two realms – the realm of sin and death and the realm of the Spirit of life. With that visual in mind, we’re going to consider our passage under three simple headings: The problem, the solution, and the reward.

Our problem is this:

The Problem

Paul describes all those who live in this realm as living ‘according to the flesh’. By ‘flesh’, he’s not referring to our body. He’s using that as a kind of shorthand to describe the life that is lived in rebellion to God. Look, for example, at verses 7-8. Paul writes:

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; **indeed, it cannot.** ⁸ Those who are in the flesh **cannot please God.** (Romans 8:7-8 ESV)

In the realm of sin and death, we do not submit to God. In fact, in the realm of sin and death, we *cannot* submit to God. Our sinful nature rejects His authority. In the Old Testament, Ezekiel describes us as having ‘hearts of stone’. Isaiah describes us as ‘blind’ to the goodness of God. I’m using the language of ‘us’ because, ever since the Garden of Eden and the sin of Adam and Eve, every person who has ever been born has been born into this ‘hoop’ of sin and death. That, in fact, is our great problem:

The Problem: We are all born into the realm of sin and death

¹ Douglas Moo, *The Letter To The Romans - Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 508-509.

The Bible is clear about that. All have sinned. All fall short of the glory of God. And that is a frightening thought because earlier Paul explained:

For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a ESV)

Here's another illustration for the visual learners in the room: Have you ever been to a water park where there is a big bucket that is slowly filling with water that eventually pours out on everyone's heads? Well, imagine TWO buckets like that – one positioned to pour out its contents on everyone in *this* hoop, and another positioned to pour out its contents on *that* hoop.

The Bible teaches that God's condemnation and wrath will be poured out on everyone who remains in the realm of sin. The final verdict that will fall on this realm is death.

There's a part of us that bristles at this, isn't there? If we're honest, I'm sure that there are more than a few people in the room who are thinking, 'Why does God make such a big deal about sin?' We feel that way because we tend to think that sin is a small thing. ESPECIALLY our own sin. We explain it away. Like a man who dresses a lion up in a dog costume and then allows it to live in the house with his family, we make peace with our sin – to the danger of those around us. As one old preacher writes:

It is to be feared that very many have little knowledge of the main enemy that they carry about with them in their bosoms.²

I think he's right. In an attempt to combat that, I want to challenge you to do something very uncomfortable this morning. I want you to think right now about the sin that shows up most frequently in your own life. Maybe it's anger. Maybe it's lust. Maybe you're a gossip. Maybe you're selfish. What is your sin of choice? Focus in on that sin and consider this.

Take a moment to reflect on how many people have been hurt by your sin through the years. How many lives have been affected? When we sin, it's like throwing a stone out into the water of a still lake; There is a ripple effect – a reverberation of hurt that spreads out to the world around us.

² John Owen, Kelly M. Kapic, and Justin Taylor eds., *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 76.

Now, imagine for a moment that you could live forever just as you are. Here's a question: What would that anger look like in your life if it were allowed to fester for 1,000 years? How much farther would the ripple spread? How much more pain would be inflicted if the world were subjected to your sin for all eternity?

My sin alone – if God allowed it to persist – would be enough to turn heaven into hell.

Because sin is not a little thing. It is a cancer that spreads. THAT is why the wages of sin is death. That is also why I can't simply jump from *this* hoop into *that* hoop. Because, for as long as I am carrying this sin with me, I can't be in the realm of the Spirit of life.

And yet, let me read verses 1-2 of our passage again:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2 ESV)

If we are in Christ Jesus – if we have confessed our sin and placed our trust in him – then there is now NO condemnation for us! That bucket will not fall on us! Instead, we have been transferred – we have been set FREE – from the realm of *death* to the realm of LIFE!

But how?

Here, Paul brings us to the solution:

The Solution

Look with me to verse 3. Here we begin to uncover the HOW of redemption. These are deep waters, so we're going to move through this slowly. Paul writes:

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. (Romans 8:3a ESV)

In our flesh, we are *weak* – like a little boy struggling to lift a box that is much too large for him, God sees that we cannot perfectly obey His law. Our hearts are constantly drawn toward the wrong things. Our passions are at war within us. Even when we *want* to do what’s right, sin pulls us back in like a magnet. Can you relate to that this morning?

In our flesh, we are weak. But HE is strong! And so, GOD did what we could not do. Look again at verse 3:

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (Romans 8:3b ESV)

The first part of the HOW of redemption that we must understand is this:

1. **Jesus has clothed himself in our sin and absorbed our punishment**

Jesus is the only person who has ever lived a perfect life. Every single thing that he ever said, thought or did was an untainted expression of love for God and love for others. He is the only person in history who was not under the curse of sin. His life was the *fulfilment* of the law.

And yet, after fulfilling the law in his perfect life, the only person who was *not* under the curse of sin took upon himself the sin of the world. As Paul writes to the Corinthians:

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)

If Jesus were himself a sinner, he could only die for his own sin. But because he was sinless, he could offer himself as a substitute in our place. And so, we read in verse 3:

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** (Romans 8:3 ESV)

God has CONDEMNED sin in the flesh! But – in an incomprehensible display of grace – he did not condemn sin in *our* flesh. He condemned it in the flesh of His perfect, blameless Son. As one pastor describes so vividly:

God took the record of all your sins that made you a debtor to wrath (sins are offences against God that bring down his wrath), and instead of holding them up in front of your face and using them as the warrant to send you to hell, God put them in the palm of his Son's hand and drove a spike through them into the cross.³

When we confess our sin and put our faith in Jesus all of our sin – past, present and future – is removed from our account and laid on Jesus. He clothed himself in our sin, and then he suffered the condemnation that we deserve.

Let's use our earlier analogy of the tipping bucket. It is as if Jesus has *wrapped us in his arms like a human shield* so that all the wrath of God that *should* have landed on us crashed against him instead.

We can be moved from the realm of death to the realm of life because Jesus has clothed himself in our sin and absorbed our punishment. But that's only the first half of the solution. Paul goes on to explain that:

2. Jesus has clothed us in his righteousness and shared his reward

Look again at verses 3-4:

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,⁴ in order that **the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us** (Romans 8:3-4a ESV)

What does Paul mean when he says that the law is fulfilled *IN US*? Didn't we just finish saying that the law was fulfilled IN JESUS. HE lived perfectly! HE loved perfectly! HE is the righteous one. So, how can Paul say that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled IN US?

He can say that because when we place our trust in Jesus we are *clothed in his righteousness*. In the same way that all of my sin has been laid on Jesus at the cross, so too has all of his righteousness been laid on me! Because I have put my trust in Jesus, I am IN CHRIST. Isn't that what Paul says in verse 1?

³ John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 45.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those **who are in Christ Jesus**. (Romans 8:1 ESV)

Very practically, then, this means that if you have confessed your sin and placed your trust in Jesus, God looks at you and sees **RIGHTEOUSNESS!** He sees **PERFECT OBEDIENCE!** He sees **JESUS!** Because you are **IN CHRIST**.

This is why I positioned these two hoops on either side of the baptismal. To be clear, baptism doesn't save us. But what it *represents* does save us. The only way to move from the realm of sin and death to the realm of the Spirit of life is to be united with Jesus.

That is the solution. And that brings us to the reward on this beautiful Easter morning:

The Reward

Look again at our passage for this morning. There is a word that Paul returns to again and again. We see it in verse 2:

For the law of the Spirit of **life** has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2 ESV)

We see it in verse 6:

For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is **life** and peace. (Romans 8:6 ESV)

We see it in verse 10:

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is **life** because of righteousness. (Romans 8:10 ESV)

And in verse 11:

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give **life** to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:11 ESV)

If condemnation, wrath and DEATH are in the bucket that will pour out on *that* hoop, then Paul would have us see here that blessing and LIFE is in the bucket that is set to pour out on *this* hoop!

According to the bible, death only exists because sin exists. But – if we are in Christ – then our sin has been done away with. In the same way that the grave did not – COULD NOT – hold Jesus, the grave will not – it CANNOT – hold those who are in Jesus! If we are his, then his LIFE is ours!

That's what baptism represents. In just a moment, a young woman will enter into this water. She will renounce her sin and profess her trust in Jesus. Then, she will be lowered into the water signifying that her sin has been laid on the cross. Jesus' death was the death that her sin deserved. Then, she will come out of the water signifying that she has been raised with Christ to newness of life! She has moved from *that* realm to *this* realm! She is in Christ, and the Spirit is in her, and she is a NEW CREATION!

THAT is our reward! If I am in Christ, then:

1. **I am raised to walk in newness of life today**

Look again at verse 2. Paul writes:

For the law of the Spirit of life has **set you free** in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2 ESV)

Paul is clearly pointing back to the promise of Ezekiel 36. There, God promised that a day was coming when He would write His law upon the hearts of His people. He declared:

And I will give you a **new heart**, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.** (Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV)

Ezekiel saw forward to a day when the Spirit of God would revive us to finally live and love as we were meant to before sin hardened our hearts. Paul is saying in our passage this morning that THAT time is NOW! We've been set free from the law of sin and death! We used to have hearts of stone that were incapable of honouring the Lord. We used to be slaves to sin. But now, we live by the law of the Spirit and we are FREE to truly LIVE!

This is one of the realities that is symbolized in baptism. We are "raised to walk in newness of life", and that resurrection life begins immediately! In Christ, we are a new creation, and the Holy Spirit helps us to finally think and see clearly. In verses 5-8, Paul compares the way that people live in these two hoops. Look there with me:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8 ESV)

Those who live in the realm of the flesh are still enslaved to sin. They are bound to think and live like the world. But, if Christ is in you, then you have been set free from sin.

Some of us need to hear that this morning. Christian, you are no longer a slave to sin.

That doesn't mean that you won't be tempted. But it DOES mean that you have every tool that you need to WIN in your fight against sin. Christ in you can and will overcome addiction. Christ in you can and will overcome unforgiveness. Slowly and steadily – from one degree of glory to the next – the Holy Spirit is going to help you to truly LIVE!

BELIEVE that! By the grace of God, PURSUE that!

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1 NIV)

Your resurrection life has already begun. So stop living like a slave to sin. You are free.

That is true. And yet, we feel a longing in our spirit, don't we. Things are not yet as they should be. Sin still nags us. Our bodies still fail us. Death still takes us.

But it will not keep us. Because, if I am in Christ:

2. I will be raised to walk in newness of life at the final resurrection

When Jesus stepped out of his tomb on Easter Sunday, he proved that death is a defeated foe. It could not hold him, and – if we indwelt by his Spirit – then it will not hold us. That's where Paul concludes in verses 9-11:

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ **If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.** (Romans 8:9-11 ESV)

Do you fear death? You don't need to. Because Jesus, our Saviour and King, stepped into our death so that we could step into his life. A day will come for each one of us – should the Lord tarry – when these bodies will be laid to rest in the ground. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is in us, then we can be sure that where Christ went, we will follow. Death has been disarmed. As Athanasius once said:

We no longer die as those condemned but as those who will arise.⁴

If you are in Christ, then you live – today – in the realm of the Spirit of life! In spite of your sin. In spite of your weakness. In spite of your shame. In spite of what you feel that you deserve. If you have placed your trust in Jesus then there is therefore now no condemnation for you. You will live and not die.

You can be certain of that. Because HE IS RISEN! He is risen indeed!

⁴ Athanasius as quoted by Ben Myers, *The Apostle's Creed - A Guide to the Ancient Catechism* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 84.