

No Condemnation - in Christ Jesus

by G.W. North

There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and we can experience freedom from sin and death by walking after the Spirit.

Scripture: Romans 7:24, Romans 8:1

Topics: "Freedom in Christ", "Walking In The Spirit"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the transformative power of being in Christ Jesus, highlighting Paul's struggle with sin and the liberation found through the Holy Spirit. He explains that the law of the Spirit of life frees believers from the law of sin and death, allowing them to walk in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. North underscores the importance of personal testimony in the gospel, asserting that true freedom from sin is evidenced by a life led by the Spirit. He elaborates on the nature of man as spirit and soul, created in God's image, and the necessity of the new law to counteract the old law of sin. Ultimately, the sermon conveys that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, as they experience true freedom and life through the Spirit.

Transcript

This text is the glorious introduction to a whole chapter of glorious truth about the Holy Spirit which has no parallel anywhere else in scripture. It would be altogether too great a task to undertake to attempt an exposition of the whole chapter, but we will touch on it here and there, finding the truth we seek for our purposes. Paul has just concluded a lengthy passage, in which he describes himself as he discovered himself to be under the law of Moses. What the law did for him was to show him the laws that controlled him; he discovered himself to be a slave of sin, bound by chains of habit to death. Even the laws of mind and memory, which brought him joy and delight in the law of God, could not liberate him from the law of sin which worked in his members. It overpowered his will. Strong determination of mind and fixity of purpose were together powerless to liberate him; although he loathed and lamented his sin, he could not rid himself of it. It was not so much what he did that troubled him, it was what was working in his members that distressed him so much. It was against him, against his desires, his mind, his will, his beliefs, his prayers, his better knowledge, against his God; it was sinful, exceedingly sinful, and he hated himself for it. At last the battle was too great for him and he cried out to God for deliverance and found it through Jesus Christ.

From that time onwards this was his testimony, 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them that 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'. It is intensely personal. He was not setting down teaching, he was recounting his experience; 'this is what I have found', he is saying, and O how precious it was to him. We are told that the words in parenthesis above are not in the most ancient and more reliable manuscripts, from which we may infer that they were not in the original epistle. They are an exact copy of Paul's words in verse four, and so the scribes, whoever they were that copied out the sacred text, are not to be thought guilty of inserting thoughts of their own, even if it was their idea to put the phrase higher up in the text. May we not infer that by doing so those people have revealed to us that they too had discovered the reason for Paul's rejoicing? He found he could walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh, and so had they.

How wonderful this experience is, and how glorious it is to every man who similarly discovers that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death. What light in darkness, especially when it is coupled, as it is here, with the fact that there is therefore no condemnation to him because he really and recognizably is in Christ Jesus. Whenever Paul's doctrine touches upon human experience of salvation it is always based on his own experience, and what glorious doctrine it is; because of this it is the gospel indeed, God's good news and man's good news in one. If the note of personal testimony is missing from gospel preaching it is a vain hope, for what at first is an enlightening message and liberating hope will die away into darkness and condemnation. That is why Paul spoke about walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit; unless a man can do that, he has no testimony that his beliefs are right, no proof that his doctrine is correct; he is just believing in unworkable theories. The walk in the Spirit is the sole proof that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has indeed set a person free from the law of sin and death. For if there is one thing that is absolutely certain, it is that dead men cannot walk; legs and feet they may have, but life they have not.

Therefore the copyists' gloss may not be a bad thing, for it emphasizes the important practical part, namely walking after the Spirit, without which all is theoretical belief. Because he was walking after the Spirit, Paul knew he was free from the law of sin and death; if this had not been so he would have walked after the flesh, because he could not have done otherwise; the walk is the test. It is entirely impossible to be free from sin and death unless the law governing it, by which it works, is nullified or countermanded in us. It is not possible to nullify or countermand spiritual and moral law unless it is replaced by another, which works in the very same elements and by the same principles as the one it replaces did. Only the working of the new law can prevent the old one from reasserting itself and regaining power over us; in the spirit as in nature there cannot be a vacuum. The new law does not break the power of the old one -- that is not its function -- but it does prevent it from reasserting itself. The power of the old law of sin is broken experimentally in every believer who knows the experience outlined in chapter six.

Essentially, originally and eventually man is spirit. He is not flesh, neither is he a body; he has a body of flesh in which he dwells on the earth in this world. All the time he dwells in his body man is both spirit and soul; man, by God's choice, is a spirit/soul. God is not spirit/soul, He is Spirit. God acquired a soul when the Son took a body. In God He is now the Spirit/Soul of God, the prototype and forerunner of every spirit/soul son of God by redemption and regeneration. The Lord Jesus became a soul when He was incarnated. Until then He was not a soul. To be a soul a person has to be born in a human body. He had appeared in bodily form prior to being incarnate, but He was not a soul then, for He had not been born man. He was spirit manifesting Himself in human or angelic form for the purpose in hand at that time only.

Spirit was breathed into human form by God. God does not make spirits, He generates them. God is the father of spirits, not of bodies. He formed or made body, He did not generate it; He generated or gave birth to man when He breathed spirit into it. Until then the shapely dust was not man. God did not breathe spirit into man; He breathed it into a form of dust which He intended to be a man, and thus created man. Man is a manifestation of God, as well as a creation of God. God made man in His own image after His own likeness. Animals and all the lower forms of being are not a manifestation of God, they are a creation of God only. They do not bear His image, they were not patterned upon God's being; their original breath was not directly from God, therefore they are not after His likeness; they were only the work of His hands made to breathe atmospheric air.

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