

## The Book of Romans Study Guide

### Chapter 8 (part 1)

After having established the principle of human bondage to the law of sin and death, and the inability to be freed from that bondage on our own, Paul now establishes the only way to be released from that eternal outcome.

#### **8:1**

When Paul states that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua,” that is a judicial term involving a verdict. But, it is not the judgment of guilt itself but the sentence or the penalty. And the reason that believers face no condemnation is that Yeshua took upon Himself the judgment and guilt that would have fallen on us without His loving sacrifice. So, the key to applying this verse to our lives is having that understanding rather than focusing on feeling guilty for stumbling in some manner.

Notice that having no condemnation is the result of being “in” Yeshua. That is a description of having a new identity established by the transformational power of God when we believe that He died in our place. So, the opposite will be true – if you do not believe and are not “in” Yeshua, the condemnation still remains upon you with no hope of avoiding the sentence of death.

Now, if you have a KJV or NJV, you will see an additional phrase at the end of this verse: “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Those words do not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus in the fourth century). The phrase is first found in the fifth century (Codex Alexandrinus) and in later manuscripts, up to the Middle Ages. That is known as the Byzantine period.

Many modern scholars believe that a scribal copyist added the same words from the end of verse 4 to enhance Paul’s teaching that grace is not a license to sin. Now, you might think that such actions would be frowned upon. And the number of instances is not great. But, there were significant distinctions in the procedures used by scribes of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Old Testament) compared to those who copied the New Testament. While both groups revered the texts, the Jewish scribal tradition was more professionalized and standardized with rigorous rules, mechanical safeguards, and methods of verification. The New Testament transmission, on the other hand, was less regimented and, in some cases, relied on non-professionals. That explains, in part, how there could be an early form and a later enhanced form of this verse.

But the problem with the additional phrase is that it makes condemnation conditional upon a believer’s behavior. And that understanding would contradict the biblical principle of salvation by grace through faith, not by works. But since the Byzantine period saw the rise of Roman Catholicism and its emphasis on receiving grace through religious acts or works, it is understandable that this scribal addition took place. We, however, abide by the purity of God’s Word, not man’s additions, no matter how well-meaning they are. That is why most modern translations like the NASB, ESV, NIV and the CJB go with the older Greek codex that is without the addition. And we abide by the contextual principle of Scripture translating Scripture. So, that leads to the conclusion that there is no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua, at any time, and without any conditions.

And that helps us to deal with potential feelings of guilt when we fail in some manner. We are free from condemnation, but God may convict our hearts to dedicate ourselves to greater faithfulness. In that regard, we can contemplate questions, such as:

- In spite of this promise in Scripture, why is it so easy to let the past weigh upon us?
- And if God has removed His condemnation, why is it often so much harder for us to remove our self-condemnation?
- How does this verse speak to a believer who still feels “guilty” for sins that have already been forgiven?

### **8:2-8**

v 2 This verse reinforces the central role of Yeshua in our salvation, not ourselves, because we have been set free from the law of sin and death. To put it another way, verse 1 tells us we are free from the guilt of sin and verse 2 tells us we are free from the power of sin. And we are also set from the law of death, because, even though we might die physically in this world, it has no power over our us in the ultimate sense because we will live on in eternity.

v 3 Paul shifts the focus to the contrast between the accomplishments of the Law of Moses (implied) and Yeshua. The Torah can do many things, including guiding and teach us, and describing the attributes of God. But it cannot give us the power to overcome our sinful weaknesses and please God. Yeshua, on the other hand, provides us with that power.

The text does not say that he came in “sinful flesh,” which is a description of common humans who are born with a sin nature and commit acts of sin. Instead, He came in the “likeness of sinful flesh.” That is an important distinction. This word (*homoioōma*) conveys the sense of a “resemblance.” On the surface, Yeshua resembled humanity, and He was a true man. But because He did not have a sin nature, nor did He ever commit a sin, His flesh was not sinful. He only physically resembled those who were sinful.

Because He was an actual man, He can represent all humanity according to the Hebraic principle of inclusive reckoning. And, accordingly, He could offer Himself for the sins of all humanity, resulting in our condemnation to fall totally upon Him, leaving no condemnation upon us.

v 4 And, in so doing, He fulfilled the punitive requirements of the Law of Moses, which were never annulled. Notice that those requirements are fulfilled “*in*” us, not “*by*” us, which is parallel to the removal of condemnation for those who are *in* Yeshua according to verse 1. He is the one who accomplishes everything that we need spiritually and the Law requires.

v 5-8 Having established the fundamental theological concepts in verses 1-4, Paul describes the importance of setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, not the flesh. That makes sense, because, according to verse 6, the flesh brings death, but the Spirit brings life and peace. So, practically speaking, we can ask what are the “warning signs” that your mind has drifted into fleshly territory?

### **8:9-17**

v 9 Paul shows that when the Spirit of God dwells within people, they are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, which is a parallel to being in Messiah according to verse 1. That establishes

the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the moment of regeneration. In other words, if a person is not indwelt by the Spirit, he or she does not belong to Messiah and is not a born-again believer at all.

- v 10 Paul refers to Messiah being “*in*” believers. Two things are evident here:
1. There is an interchangeable character to the persons of God’s triune nature. The Spirit, implying the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ/Messiah are all used in this text to describe who indwells believers.
  2. We are both in Messiah and Messiah is in us, which conveys a sense of union with Him. What does that mean exactly? This is not about the way that Hinduism teaches that individual human souls can be liberated from the physical world and become absorbed into the divine. Biblical union with Messiah is about believers being spiritually identified with Yeshua so that His death, life, and righteousness become our own, while our individual identity is preserved and empowered by His indwelling presence.
- v 11 He shows a key outcome of the indwelling of the Spirit having to do with our resurrection. Now, we know from Galatians 1:1 that God the Father raised Yeshua from the dead. Here we see that the Spirit was the agent who carried out the will of the Father by raising Yeshua,  
and, in the same way, the Father will give life to our mortal bodies through the Spirit. And that makes sense because He is constantly indwelling us and is standing by, so to speak, ready to act when the time comes.
- v 12-13 Paul then draws the conclusion that we are under obligation to live by the Spirit, not by the flesh. This becomes a key response to the recurring question regarding sin and its relationship to grace. Instead of sinning so that grace may abound, we are to live under the control of the indwelling Spirit of God. And that is the real problem that believers face when it comes to sin. The Spirit of God is there indwelling us the whole time, but we fail to let Him control our thoughts and behavior.
- v 14 He shows that the ability to be led by the Spirit is limited to those who are sons or children of God, meaning transformed believers through faith in Yeshua.
- v 15 Then, he contrasts life as a slave to sin and death that is marked by fear, with a life in the family of God through adoption. That results in an intimate relationship with God that entitles us to call Him “Abba, Father,” where *Abba* is the Aramaic term that a dependent child would use warmly when addressing a biological father, and the Greek word *Pater*, translated as Father in this verse, was used to convey respect for someone in a position of authority.
- v 16-17 Paul continues down this line of reasoning that builds upon our adoption by the Father. That adoption means we become His children, which means we are the Father’s heirs. But since Yeshua is the “firstborn of creation” (Col 1:15) and thus is entitled to a double portion of inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17; cf. Heb. 1:2), that makes us fellow or joint heirs with Him.

And then he continues with that linkage by saying that if we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him. That, of course, is the hard part. It is easy to like the inheritance aspect. The suffering? Not so much. Yeshua made it clear that He would be glorified by His suffering unto death (Jn. 12:23; 13:31-32; Heb 2:9). So, because we are unified with Yeshua, and fellow heirs, Paul is saying that we, too, share in His suffering and His glorification.