



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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Lesson 9

Romans 8:1-14 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

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

The Bible describes Christians as people who are “in Christ Jesus.” They have Christ Jesus dwelling in them by the Spirit and they dwell in Christ Jesus to do His will and demonstrate His love and character to others. In addition, to be “in Christ Jesus” means to be in the Body of Christ, the Church. In Romans 12:5, Paul wrote, “so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” The Christian’s close personal spiritual union with their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is described in the Bible as “being in Christ” and “Christ in me.” Jesus Christ died on the cross in our behalf and we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; therefore, we truly are not under condemnation by the Law of God. In Christ, God considers us judicially in the right. Previously, we deserved and were to receive the wages of sin; that is, death (physical, spiritual, and eternal death). But now, as believers in Christ Jesus, we have received the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus; therefore, we will not be condemned along with the world. In Romans 6:23, Paul wrote: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of

God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As Christians, because we are justified by faith, we are not under God’s just condemnation to die eternally. However, as Paul wrote in Romans 6:11, as Christians we have responsibilities: “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” We know that we are “alive to God in Christ Jesus” and we know by experience that we are not under God’s just condemnation. But, as Christians, if we sin and refuse to repent, we will be disciplined by the Lord; as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:32, “But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.”

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

In this verse and the following verses of this chapter, Paul teaches about our sanctification: of our being set apart by Jesus Christ for God’s holy and loving use, and how the Holy Spirit will develop our character and draw us closer to God in Christ and help us obey the law of God, the law of love for God, others, and ourselves. Through the process of sanctification in this life, we will be transformed into the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit who will help us study the Bible and obey the truth of God and thereby renew our minds. In Romans 12:2, Paul described what we can do to renew our minds: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by

testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul described the process and results of sanctification: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Jesus Christ sanctifies us “in the truth” and God’s Word, the Bible, is truth (see John 17:17). The Bible teaches that the penalty for sin is death, and we have all sinned; so, prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, we will all die physically. Because the Holy Spirit indwells Christians and unites us to Jesus Christ, even if we die physically, we will not die spiritually: we will go to be with the Lord Jesus in heaven where we will await His return and the resurrection of our glorified human bodies. By His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death; we are not under the condemnation of the law to die eternally. Apart from faith in Christ Jesus, we would suffer both physical and spiritual death forever. Since we are set free from the law of sin and death, the Holy Spirit can work within us to sanctify us and enable us to serve the Lord Jesus according to the will of God.

(Romans 8:3) 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 to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

Because we have desires and emotions (the flesh) that have been strengthened in their sinful intensity or power by our previous sins and temptations, when we are tempted to follow sinfully these or similar desires and emotions (the flesh) and sin once again. We become too weak to resist when we know, reason about, or are reminded that what we are tempted to do is against God's law and sinful. The flesh (our desires and emotions) are not sinful in and of themselves, for Jesus had emotions and desires, but we are not to follow our emotions and desires when they would lead us to disobey the law of God, the Bible, and the teachings of Jesus. However, even when we know the law of God and know right from wrong, we are so weakened by our previous sins and strong sinful temptations (that previous sins and failings have made even stronger) that our knowledge is not sufficient to help us resist our temptations; therefore, eventually we sin once again. But thanks be to God for sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (as a fully human being, but without sin)! Jesus Christ condemned sin in the flesh by always perfectly resisting His temptations to sin, by refusing to follow His emotions and desires when they tempted Him to sin, and therefore perfectly obeying the law of God. As the perfect Son of God, Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice acceptable to God and as the only perfect substitute possible for the punishment we deserve for our sins. We need more than rules and regulations and knowledge of right and wrong that the law gives us. We need God's help directly and personally through the Holy Spirit who helps

us overcome temptations and live for Jesus.

(Romans 8:4) so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Because Jesus Christ wants to sanctify us or make us loving and holy, He has filled us with His Spirit. As we study the Bible, He increases our knowledge and understanding of God in Christ and the truth of God's Word written. The process of sanctification helps us increasingly fulfill the righteous requirement of the law, which is to love God, others, and ourselves according to the Bible. In Christ Jesus, we now walk according to the Spirit and more habitually practice obeying the law of love (though imperfectly obeying the law of love, we become increasingly perfect in love). The direction or purpose of our daily lives is no longer to selfishly fulfill or follow our desires and emotions and commit sins. Jesus Christ has changed the direction or purpose of our lives, so we now live or intend to follow the Spirit of Christ.

(Romans 8:5) 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.

Those who have not bowed before Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior have not been set free from slavery to sin—from bondage to the law of sin and death. By God's grace (by God's undeserved gift) through faith in Jesus

Christ, true Christians have been set free from bondage to sin; therefore, the true Christian will choose to set their minds (with the help of the Holy Spirit) on the things of the Spirit. If Christians sin, it is because they have temporarily set their minds on the things of the flesh; therefore, they must repent and choose to set their minds once again on the things of the Spirit.

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

To “set the mind on the Spirit” is to focus on and resolve to follow (with the Lord’s help) the leading of the Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit will never lead anyone to disobey the commands and teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit will never lead or encourage us to follow our desires and emotions when they tempt us to disobey the law of God. The Spirit of Christ encourages Christians to choose every morning and throughout the day to follow the Holy Spirit and the truth revealed by Jesus Christ in the Bible. After we have set our mind on the Spirit, through our prayers, our study of the Bible, and the guidance and power the Holy Spirit gives us, we will know good and loving things to do, and we will be able to obey Jesus Christ in everything. Then, we will know by experience the spiritual life that flows from walking in the ways of Christ. We will know the peace of God within ourselves—our conscience will not condemn us but affirm our way of life

is consistent with the will of God. We will know what it is like to live now in the Kingdom of God; for as Paul wrote in Romans 14:17, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

(Romans 8:7) For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot,

Those who have not bowed morally and spiritually before Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior cannot do anything other than set their minds on fulfilling their selfish desires (the flesh). They cannot do anything but disobey God because they remain hostile to (at war against) God. They may call themselves “Christians,” but they remain self-centered and committed to trying to use God and others to fulfil their selfish desires. They live in a state of war against God because their way of life is hostile to God. They cannot and will not love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength or their neighbors as themselves. They will disregard God’s laws and when confronted with God’s laws and the demands of the law of love, they will not submit to God’s laws but will continue to live in disobedience to God’s laws and unreasonably argue against the Biblical and spiritual application of God’s laws.

(Romans 8:8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The true Christian can please God and make God happy by the set of their minds and the corresponding way they live according to the Bible. They have set their minds on the things of the Spirit and going where the Spirit of Christ leads them. Those who have set their mind of the things of the flesh are “in the flesh” instead of “in the Spirit.” By following their emotions and desires instead of sound reason and the truth of the Bible, they cannot please God. Those who are not Christians open themselves up to the punishment of God. If a true Christian sets their mind temporarily on the flesh, they open themselves to the corrective discipline of God until they repent and return to obeying God. As a true Christian, if we temporarily set our minds on the flesh, we will grieve the Holy Spirit. As Paul commanded and warned in Ephesians 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

(Romans 8:9) But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

If we are true Christians, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. The Bible uses a variety of ways to teach that God is one God in three Persons. If the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we belong to Jesus Christ and He is our Lord and Savior; therefore, we choose to set our minds on the Spirit and doing God’s will and wanting God’s will to be done even if

we preferred something different. As true Christians, from time to time we will be tempted to follow the desires of our flesh and we will sometimes sin, but the Holy Spirit (sometimes along with God's discipline, if necessary) will lead us to repent and return to following the Lord Jesus.

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

Because of sin our bodies will die someday unless the Lord Jesus returns before our death. The Spirit of Christ indwells us, while the risen, glorified, human body of Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God. Since Jesus is God, the Son of God, Jesus' Spirit can indwell every Christian all around the world, even as He holds the whole world together (see Colossians 1:17). The Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of life, indwells true Christians and enables and leads them to do what is right, to focus on righteousness instead of godlessness—to focus on love, trust, and loyalty to Jesus Christ and God our Father. Indeed, as Paul wrote in Romans 8:16, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God;” therefore, we call God “our Father.”

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

Paul summed up a major component of our Christian faith in this verse. Because the Holy Spirit indwells true Christians (and really, you are a true Christian, or you are not a Christian at all) when our mortal bodies die, we will be given new bodies and be raised from the dead at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Paul described this in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 15). The same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead will raise us from the dead, but even in death the Spirit of Jesus Christ remains united with our spirit. Our spirit will remain with the Spirit of Christ in heaven until we return and reign with Christ in our glorified, resurrected human bodies.

(Romans 8:12) So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

We owe our lives and eternal destiny to Jesus Christ, who died on the cross so God could with love, justice, and mercy forgive us for our sins—for we once set our lives on following our sinful desires, our desires of the flesh, contrary to the law of love for God, our neighbors, and ourselves. We do not owe anything to the flesh that led us into sin and hostility toward God. Nor do we owe anything to those who may have led us into sin. As Christians, we have no good reason to return to living according to or following the desires of the flesh.

(Romans 8:13) 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.

To live according to the flesh means to live unlawfully (contrary to God's law of love) while following our desires and emotions instead of sound reason and the Bible's teachings. The Bible teaches us how to live as God created us to live in His image. If we insist on living unreasonable lives apart from God, then we will die physically and spiritually and remain separated from God. Therefore, we must pray for the Holy Spirit to help us study the Bible and apply the Bible rightly so we can follow the ways of Jesus Christ. In the strength of the Holy Spirit, we must pray and strive to "put to death" the ungodly and unloving desires that the world, the flesh, and the devil tempt us to follow.

(Romans 8:14) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

If we are children of God, then we will be led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is not "the spirit of slavery" so that we "fall back into fear," but "the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (see Romans 8:15). We want to obey God because we love God. The Spirit of God will help us read, understand, and rightly apply what the Bible teaches. The Spirit of God will give us love, courage, wisdom, and power to do the will of God in all things. Whenever we are tempted, fall, and follow the flesh that fall will be temporary and the exception to our regular

way of life—of obeying Jesus Christ. Following the flesh will not be the rule or direction of our lives as the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify us and set us apart for God’s holy use. If we do not return to following God our Father as the Bible teaches; then, God will discipline us as we read in Hebrews 12:6, “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What is the law of sin and death and how can someone be set free from this law?
2. How can the righteous requirement of the law be fulfilled in us?
3. What does it mean to set our minds of the things of the Spirit?
4. Describe the mind set on the flesh.
5. Describe some aspects or qualities of the Christian’s way of life.

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