

3. Romans 8.1-14 p1

Assurance for Sinner-saints and a Sanctifying Obligation

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Introduction

Paul opens the chapter with a conclusion: **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** (8.1). Why does he bring up the topic of condemnation, specifically, of no condemnation that refers to 5.12-21 and thus to its opposite, justification? This is a word of assurance for sinner-saints, just described in 7.14-25. Conscious of the depths of our sinfulness in the fall and the presence of evil with us when we want to do right, we need an assuring word.

Paul gives this assurance in 8.1-11 and then draws out an obligation from it in 12-14.

I. Assurance for sinner-saints

“Therefore” (8.1) points to a conclusion that has support in the preceding context. The word “for” (8.2, 3, 5-11) indicates further support. So, there are four pillars of support for the assuring word that those in Christ Jesus no longer stand under condemnation, under God’s pronouncement of guilt and liability to the punishment of death.

A. The promise of deliverance

7.24-25a: **Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death** [death that is the wage of sin]? ²⁵ **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** Because God through Christ will deliver sinner-saints from the body of this death at the resurrection, then there is no condemnation, no liability to the punishment of death.

B. Freedom from the law of sin and death

8.2: **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.**

Since condemnation is the outworking of the law of sin and death, that is, of sin’s use of the law to work death in us, then freedom from this use of the law by sin means freedom from condemnation.

C. Freedom for fulfilling the law

8.3-4: 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,** 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.** The law could not save because of our sinfulness, but God does save in Christ by breaking sin’s power and dominion (3) so that we may live its requirements. The law then cannot condemn sinner-saints who are in Christ (2) and who walk according to the Spirit (4).

D. Ability to submit to God’s law

8.5-11: 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.** ⁶ **For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.** ⁷ **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.** ⁹ **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.**

The apostle contrasts walking according to the flesh with walking according to the Spirit. On one hand, those in the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh (5a), They live in hostility to God, are unable to submit to God’s law or please Him (7), and are on the path to death (6). On the other hand, those in the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (5b) are able to submit to God’s law, are able to please Him, and are on the path to life and peace (6b) coming in the resurrection of their mortal bodies (10-11). So, there is no condemnation because

you are on the path of submission to God's law, you belong to Christ, and have His righteousness and the promise of resurrection like His by the Spirit.

Summary: You are a sinner-saint, yes, but there is *no condemnation* but only justification for you in Christ Jesus because 1) you have the promise of deliverance from your wretchedness by God through Christ, 2) you have been set free from sin's use of the law leading to death 3) you have been freed to fulfill the law; it is condemned by Christ's work not you. 4) You are able to submit to God's law so it can no longer condemn you to death for your hostility; the path of walking in submission according to the Spirit leads to bodily resurrection not condemnation.

II. Our sanctifying obligation

8.12-14: ¹²**So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.** 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.** ¹⁴**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**

A. The indebtedness (the conclusion, **So then**, v. 12)

1. Negative statement: **we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.**
2. Positive implication: **we are debtors** {to the Spirit, to live according to the Spirit}.

The great certainty of life and peace in resurrection glory by the work of Christ not only assures but it also obligates. Thankful, joyful, delightful (per the context) obligation is the inescapable conclusion that arises from the reality of our justification (from having no condemnation as supported above).

B. Reasons confirming the negative and positive of our indebtedness

1. Confirmation that we are not debtors to the flesh

13a: **For if you live according to the flesh you will die.** This is a strong warning directly addressing you: if you live according to the flesh you will die. However, as the pillars of assurance show, death is impossible for you. So, living according to the flesh, *under its debt*, as your master, under obligation to it is impossible. You are not a debtor to the flesh. [Note how a conditional may be true even if the if-part is false]

2. Confirmation that we are debtors to the Spirit

13b: **if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** Eternal life is guaranteed to you only if you are walking in the Spirit now defined as **by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body.**

Putting sin to death in your body is necessary for the attainment of life.

You are under obligation to do what is necessary for attaining life.

You are under obligation to put sin to death *by the Spirit*

Conclusion

Having these four deep roots that assure us of our justification (of no condemnation), leads to the conclusion that we have a sanctifying obligation to the Holy Spirit; it is confirmed in 13-14. From this context, what is the practical obligation? Our duty is to engage a serious life and death battle with sinful deeds. We do so by walking in the Spirit, setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, and by submitting ourselves to God's law for obedience by living its requirements (8.4).