

God's Work, Not Ours

Text: Romans 8.2–4

Theme: The assurance of our salvation is because God has done the saving through Christ Jesus and not because of us

Introduction — Dad, years back, had raccoon problem in garden with sweet corn

- got live trap from county; caught, County worker took him away
- next week: raccoon back again, so Dad trapped him again
- happened two more times
- found out county would drop raccoon on edge of town, where he would find way back
- it's like he'd been trapped, set free
- but did not want that freedom more than Dad's sweet corn

Sometimes like Christians with sin & guilt: we have been set free

- sadly, many do not take advantage of that freedom
- no longer slaves to sin, but still keep acting like
- need to be taught clearly: no condemnation for you have been set free!
- convinced if you'd preach these verses to yourself, make great difference
- do this daily and see the change it produces within you

Glorious truth of Scripture, not only no condemnation for those in Christ, but also

- redeemed Romans 3.24
- alive to God Romans 6.11
- possessors of eternal life (Rom. 6:23),
- free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2),

- members of one spiritual body (Rom. 12:5),
- sharers in Christ's work (Rom. 16:3, 9),
- sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2),
- recipients of grace (1 Cor. 1:4),
- secure in death (1 Cor. 15:18),
- bold to speak the truth (2 Cor. 2:17),
- new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17),
- free (Gal. 2:4),
- justified (Gal. 2:17),
- recipients of the blessings given to Abraham (Gal. 3:14),
- sons of God (Gal. 3:26),
- one with others regardless of race, gender, or social condition (Gal. 3:28),
- recipients of every spiritual blessing in heaven (Eph. 1:3),
- seated in the heavens (Eph. 2:6),
- created for good works (Eph. 2:10),
- brought near to God (Eph. 2:13),
- partakers with Jews of the promises (Eph. 3:6),
- forgiven by God (Eph. 4:32),
- encouraged (Phil. 2:1),
- at peace (Phil. 4:7),
- provided for (Phil. 4:19),
- anticipating the resurrection of our bodies (1 Thess. 4:16),
- overseen by providence (1 Thess. 5:18),
- alive (2 Tim. 1:1), and
- saved (2 Tim. 2:10)

Well, this morning, we move into Romans 8.2–4

- as we've seen: for those in Christ: no condemnation
- how can this be so, though?
- how did this happen to the likes of us?

We see the working of the Trinity in this tremendous work, beginning here with...

I. THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT AT WORK

- like to take the words or phrases separately so we might understand them clearly
- and in understanding, I believe you'll see your freedom from condemnation all the more

1. "For..."

- so often overlook smallest, yet most powerful words in Bible
- here is one, just three letters: For
- but in this word we are given reason why we have no more condemnation upon us
- it will tell us how we came to be in this rarified and glorified position
- you, and all who are in Christ Jesus, are there because something grand has happened
- and here it is

2. "...the law of the Spirit of life..."

- at first glance, we all understand who the Spirit is: Holy Spirit of God
- and if you read the NT, you see that He is indeed the giver of life
- again, not surprising: the Spirit is the breath of God, breathing new life where God wills

- **John 6:63**—“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”
- **2 Corinthians 3:6**—“...who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”
- just a few verses down from where we are now in Romans 8, we read this
- **Romans 8:11**—“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.”
- even OT knew this
- **Jeremiah 31:33**—“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
- **Ezekiel 36:27-28** — 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.
- okay, fine, but what is this about the law of the Spirit of life?
- Paul uses the word “law” in different ways, ch 7 would reveal this quite clearly
- but he does so here as well
- think of it like this: if “law” had a capital “L” on it, you’d know: Law of God, 10 commandments

- here in v. 2, however, not referring to that
- law, even as used in ch. 6 & 7, is a power, a force operating in us
- so, the law of the Spirit is the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in hearts & lives
- He does this through the gospel, changing lives, giving new birth, making dead sinners alive
- in single definitive act Spirit has set you free
- **2 Corinthians 5:17—“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”**

3. “...has set you free in Christ Jesus...”

- this working has liberated you in Christ Jesus
- on the basis of Christ’s merits: His perfect obedience, His atoning sacrifice on the cross, His powerful resurrection, His glorious ascension
- the gospel is worked in you
- oh, glorious union with Christ, what is like unto it?
- **Romans 6:5-6 ESV 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.**
- this the Spirit has done!

4. “...from the law of sin and death.”

- here is this word “law” again, which one is this

- it is parallel to what is at beginning of v. 2, so immediate context helps us
- this is the power or principle of sin and death that have dominion over us before Christ
- many of you learned about Law of God this morning from Psalm 19

- **Psalm 19:7-9 ESV**

7 The law of the Lord is perfect,

reviving the soul;

the testimony of the Lord is sure,

making wise the simple;

8 the precepts of the Lord are right,

rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is pure,

enlightening the eyes;

9 the fear of the Lord is clean,

enduring forever;

the rules of the Lord are true,

and righteous altogether.

- but that Law, when we were exposed to us, showed us what sin is in our hearts
- once, when one of my grandsons quite young, saw this
- he had been well taught: you do not go into the street
- he was helping me sweep leaves off sidewalk & driveway
- I was on driveway apron, so he wanted to be there with Papa
- but I watched him with his broom, 3 sizes too big for him, creep closer to street
- I warned him by simply calling his name

- he looked at me, smiled, and with toes just on tarred line of curb & street
- stuck his broom as far out into street as he could
- Law is good and perfect, but our sinful nature takes it and corrupts it
- no where so concisely and clearly stated as in Romans 6.23
- **“For the wages of sin is...death”** yes, you know it, don’t you
- but praise God Almighty, through His Spirit, He sets us free from this principle
- no longer do sin and death reign over us
- but we must press on...

Remember, the Trinity is at work here, as we see...

II. THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK

- we can as easily ask “How did this happen?” This power of the Spirit’s work?
- and once again, we are given how this took place thru God the Father’s might

1. “For...”

- here it is once again
- telling how we no longer are under wrath of God
- how we are free in Christ Jesus from this most compelling principle of sin and death

2. “...God has done...”

- I think I could spend an entire Sunday just on these three words

- God has done = He has done all the work that is necessary for our salvation
- you didn't do it, you would never do it, nor could you ever do it
- God doesn't come and cooperate with you; He does all the work to save you
- Acts 13:38-39 — 38 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.
- challenge you to land on this singular phrase this week and ruminate on it often
- but what, precisely, has God done?

3. "...what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do."

- now, we're back to this word "law" once again
- here, I believe, it is referring to capital "L" Law
- God's law, good, perfect, but unable to save us, to deliver us, to free us
- another law, a power, a principle holds us: that of sin & death
- and it takes what is God's and corrupts it, weakens it
- this further makes it unable to justify us
- Law says, "Do this and live!" and our sinful hearts say, "I will not!"
- or, in our sinful pride, we proclaim, "This I can do and I will pull myself up to heaven by it"
- so, what law couldn't do, God has done
- and now we're told how God did this great work

4. “By sending His own Son...”

- these words hardly need any explaining, do they?
- **John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”**
- oh, brothers and sisters, I hope your heart thrills at these words
- **He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all**
- **God shows His love for us in this**
- **1 John 4:9-10 — 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**
- I fear we’ll not make it thru these verses yet again
- and I am reminded, not to give you all the whole bale at one time
- so just allow me to finish with this

Oh, how we praise the great Three-in-One God, for now we see...

III. THE POWER OF CHRIST AT WORK

- before creation ever existed, the Holy Trinity willed the covenant of redemption
- before man was made, sinned and needed deliverance, this was the truth
- God the Father said, “I will send You, My Son, to live and die for them”
- God the Son replied, “And I will gladly go”
- and so He came...

1. “...in the likeness of sinful flesh...”

- if Joseph would have been his earthly progenitor, his birth father, you have a sinner born
- if Jesus didn't come in flesh, He doesn't represent us fully and we are not saved
- if Jesus came in the same sinful flesh you and I have—if He was born a sinner—whew!
- we have no salvation at all; just a dead martyr who cannot deliver us from God's wrath
- so, Jesus did indeed take on human flesh, but He was without sin
- it was in the likeness...real body, but no sin nature: God and Man together
- but Jesus was “conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary”
- all the earlier creeds state this
- had to be the God-Man: both truly God and truly man
- by being truly man, He would bear the same penalty that is due to each of us: death
- but by also being truly God, He is the sinless Savior, the perfectly spotless Lamb of God
- and this is precisely why He came

2. “...and for sin...”

- to deal with sin; making propitiation for sin
- **Romans 3:25 ESV “[Jesus Christ]...whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness...**

- this is how God condemns sin in the flesh
- a real man died on that cross
- but it was the Son of God offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice
- this sacrifice satisfied the wrath of God: atonement was made

In my darkness Jesus found me
Touched my eyes and made me see
Broke sin's chains that long had bound me
Gave me life and liberty

CHORUS

Oh, glorious love of Christ my Lord divine,
That made Him stoop to save a soul like mine.
Through all my days, and then in heaven above,
My song will silence never,
I'll worship Him forever,
And praise Him for His glorious love.

I will need return to this next week, Lord willing

Conclusion – John Chrysostom, had the confidence of being “in Christ”

- Chrysostom was patriarch, leader of church in Constantinople, late 300s, early 400s AD
- sermons earned him the ire of emperor of Roman Empire
- emperor threatened him with punishment
- Chrysostom’s response thoroughly grounded in Scripture & hope found there

Emperor: I will banish you from the empire

Chrysostom: You can not banish me for this world is my Father’s house

Emperor: Well, I will slay you

Chrysostom: Nay, you can not, for my life is hid with Christ in God

Emperor: I will take away your treasures

Chrysostom: No, you can not for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there already

Emperor: Then I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friend left

Chrysostom: Nay, you can not, for I have a friend in heaven from whom you can not separate me. I defy you; for there is nothing that you can do to hurt me.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus