

SALVATION NOT CONDEMNATION (PART 2)

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Last week we considered these words from Romans 8:1 and how Christ, on the cross, made us safe from the penalty of sin. In short, for those who know Jesus as their Savior, there is no pronouncement of guilt because with His blood, he paid the price of sin and tasted the sting of death for us. It was His substitutionary atonement that removed our guilt, set us free from sin, and provided eternal life with God. In Christ we find salvation not condemnation.

Since Christ makes us safe from sin, I want to consider this question: "How do I know if I am Christ." Again, we find our answer in verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*** Those words offer a contrast. There are some who "walk after the flesh" and some who "walk after the Spirit." Let's pursue what those two phrases mean.

"Walking after the flesh" is a metaphor of people under condemnation. It is a summation of those who desire to go their own way, do their own thing, and in their rebellion, refuse to obey God through His Word. In truth, all of us are selfish; all of us self-preserve; and before we put our faith in Christ for salvation, all of us stand condemned because we love ourselves more than we love God. However, after we repent (turn from our sins and turned to Christ), we now "walk after the Spirit." We now desire to follow God *MORE THAN* we follow ourselves.

To be completely honest, we don't always desire to follow God more than ourselves! My sin nature still resides within me, and it fights me just like Paul's sin nature fought him. In Romans 7:18-19, 24, the apostle says, "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.... 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" In other words, Paul is at war within himself!

That war, in some ways, is good because it is one indication of knowing if I am "in Christ." The constant struggle between my flesh (which is always pulling me in a direction to please myself) and the Spirit (who is helping me desire to please God) serves as a marker of genuine regeneration. Paul later describes it this way in Galatians 5:17, "*the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*" In other words, the war within me is good because it reveals the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work within. If anything, the war lends itself to an assurance of my salvation.

This brings me to a natural question: "If there is war between my flesh and the Spirit that resides within me, how do I win the war?" Again, Galatians 5:16, "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*" Practically that means we must work to please God. At salvation, there is a partnership formed with God whereby the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin and guides me in the way of righteousness while I make the conscious choice and effort to do that which is good, right, holy, honorable, and just. In short, while the phrase "Let go and let God" sounds catchy, it isn't Scripturally accurate. I don't let go, and I'm not a victim. When confronted with temptation, I make the choice to either fulfil my fleshly desire or to access the escape that God provides (1 Cor 10:13).

Finally, as we go back to Romans 8, we can encourage our war-torn souls with verse 2, "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" These words stand as great comfort, for Paul is saying that you may be struggling now, but the struggle is worth it! There is coming a day when we will struggle no more because those who are "in Christ" have been freed from the penalty of sin and death. For all who are "in Christ," the Spirit of God has set them free from the punishment they justly deserved. In Christ, we find salvation not condemnation; pardon instead of penalty; and grace that has replaced our guilt. To Him alone be glory, honor, and praise.