

## **Resting in His Righteousness**

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

(Romans 8:1-4 KJV)

If you haven't read the passage above, please take the opportunity to read it before you continue, and if you have already read it I would encourage you to reread it, listening to it as voice of the Spirit of God to you who are in Christ. Let it soak in. Let it break through the familiarity. Let it melt the hardness of heart born from pain and struggle. Let it gladden the soul burdened by indwelling sin. Let it strengthen the bones broken by the weight of life. In Christ you are freed, forgiven, and filled by Him, "who is the head of all rule and authority."

You see, it is easy and common for the weight of daily life to overshadow the glory of God and the gospel. We strive and we fail. We fight and we lose. We aim and we miss. This is everyday living for the Christian. Sin has so corrupted us and this world that while we long for it, perfection will ever allude us here. By God's grace, the Scriptures are not silent in regards to our failures, our struggle, and our hope.

While mankind was dead, condemned, helpless, and hopeless, God showed up. He didn't just give us a word of encouragement, His Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He didn't give us more requirements that we couldn't meet, He became our righteousness. He didn't ignore the debt we owe, He poured out His wrath on Christ on the cross to satisfy its demands. In Christ we are justified by faith, have peace with God, made alive, set free from sin's dominion, delivered from the guilt of the law, filled with the Spirit of life, transformed into His image, loved evermore, and kept by the power of the Lord of all. Praise Him! All our failures are undone in Christ, all our need supplied in Him, and all our wounds healed in Him.

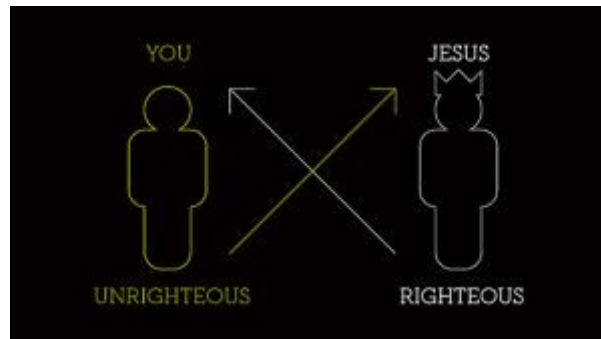
But often this is not where we live our lives. We allow guilt from residing sin to blur the forgiveness Christ has accomplished for us. We allow the daily struggles with sin to convince us that we are not free from sin's bondage. We allow the shame over not meeting our self-set standards of holiness to keep us away from Him who has reconciled us, loves us, and wants to be known by us.

How do we experience the freedom found in Christ as we live our lives? How do we enjoy the fullness of life that Christ came to give us here and now? How do we rest from our endless attempts of self-effort, seeking to make ourselves acceptable before God?

Romans 8:1-4 leads us down the right path – to the gospel. As Charles Spurgeon wrote, "the gospel is milk for babes, and meat for strong men." We begin with the gospel but never advance past the gospel. It is the one sure foundation of the believer. It is not only the power of God unto salvation but it is the power of God for sanctification, as we gaze upon Christ in it we are transformed into His likeness. It is bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, medicine for the sick, and balm for the wounded, and hope for the hopeless. This is exactly what is going on in this passage.

The Bible is clear that we, all apart from Christ, deserve nothing but death, wrath, and condemnation. But while this still lingers in the text, Paul breaks out and proclaims “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are Christ Jesus.” Wow! Really? No condemnation!? I beg your pardon Paul, but isn’t this what I deserve? Isn’t God a just and holy God whose character and commands require a righteousness that I do not have nor am able to achieve? How is this possible? Paul continues, explaining why, “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” In Christ, you have been set free from condemnation because you have been set free from bondage to sin and death by the Spirit of life. But that still doesn’t explain why no condemnation and how we can now be free from our debt of sin. So Paul pushes on, “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.” We could not obey the law and therefore are unable to meet the righteous requirement of God, so God provided that which was needed in the incarnation, where the Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and was crucified, bearing the weight of sin and wrath, satisfying the justice of God. So our debt has been paid, our sin has been dealt with but we still have no righteousness, no holiness of our own so as to be acceptable in God’s sight. So a question of condemnation still remains, because we not only need our debt cleared but righteousness before God.

But Paul is not finished. He writes that all that has been mentioned above happened “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled...” Fulfilled in whom? In Christ? That’s what we would expect because it is He who came in the flesh, fulfilled the law and its demands, died to satisfy God’s wrath, and was raised to be exalted and give us life. Naturally in reading this passage our minds should want to read that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in Christ because only he has fulfilled the law, but that is not what it says at all. It says these things God did “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.” Fulfilled in us! Fulfilled in all who have repented and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fulfilled in all who have been given the Spirit of life.



But how can this be? This is important because this is what the whole passage hinges on. This is the reason why there is no condemnation for those in Christ. This is why we could be set free from the law of sin and death. This is why we have any hope today and for eternity before God. So here it is, when you were saved, when you repented of your sins and believed the gospel, you were eternally united to Christ by the Spirit of God, so much so that his death became your death, his resurrection became your resurrection, and his righteousness became your righteousness. Wow! Yes, you read that correctly – his righteousness is now your righteousness. He not only died the death that we deserved but Christ lived the life that we were created for in perfect obedience to the Father. 2 Corinthians 5:21 declares, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” This is the GREAT EXCHANGE – our sin for His

righteousness, our debt for His redemption, our rebellion for His reconciliation. He has done it all. There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus! There is nothing that you can do to make yourself right before God, not before or after salvation. There is nothing that can separate you from Him for your union with him is grounded in Him and His righteousness. We are ever accepted, forgiven, and loved by God in Christ.

**RESPONSE:**

**REPENT:** Repent of your sin, confess your failures, and flee to Christ.

**REST:** Rest in Christ and His righteousness. You are free, accepted, and blessed in Him.

**REJOICE:** Rejoice over God's grace, Christ's finished and sufficient work, and your redemption.

**REPEAT:** Repeat this glorious truth to others that they may find rest and to yourself that you will continue to rest in Him.