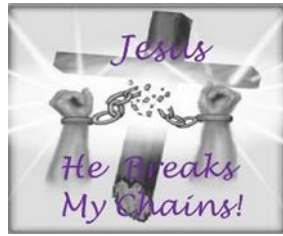


Free from the Power of Sin



Set Free

Romans 8:1-4

If you've got your bibles, let's be opening to Romans chapter 8 this morning. We're now going to try to switch from Vacation Bible School and take our mind back to the sermon series we started the first Sunday of July, and that's about the freedom we have in Christ. If you remember, that Sunday on July 1st, we talked about how we were free from the penalty of sin. This morning, we are going to switch gears and try to see, hopefully, at the conclusion of this hour, that we are also free from the power of sin. I've got to confess to you this morning that we partied hard this week. From last Sunday morning, and it started before last Sunday morning, literally for the last week and a half, we have partied hard in the Spirit. The Bible talks about not being drunk with wine, but being drunk with the Spirit, and we've been drunk with the Spirit all week long. If I can just be honest with you, I've got a spiritual hangover this morning. I really do! I think several of us do here this morning, so this is going to be a little different than what I normally do. About a quarter to ten last night, I told Celisa, I think I'm supposed to preach this morning because Kory went to Arizona to do a marriage conference with the Pima Indians with the mission team. So about a quarter to ten last night, we thought it might be good to get started on the sermon. Well, I don't need to say anymore, amen. Let's stand together and read God's Word together.

It is kind of neat this morning to know that we just raised 129,476.03 for missions! We've got a group of kids and adults in Arizona this morning, then Josh, Stacey, and their family are here at the 7:50 service, and they will be boarding an airplane tomorrow to go to Malawi. I think I can say that we can keep you there at least three years with the offering that we raised. We're excited about the commitment we made to them. I know they're going to be rushed today, but if you get a chance today if you see them in the hallway, just say hi and bye to them. I know many of us, all of us, are going to be praying for them on a daily basis as they go to Malawi. Let's pray for their parents and their families because this is bittersweet. It is so awesome to know that God has called one of your family members to give up life here to go somewhere else, but you also know on the other end that means they're not going to see them for a while. So let's please pray for Stacey and Josh's family, and pray for all of us because there are a lot of us as friends that are going to really miss them for the next several years. Listen to what the Word of God says in Romans chapter 8.

Scripture

"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 from the law of sin and death. 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, 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."

(Prayer)

Father, we thank You this morning for this awesome opportunity to gather in Your house on this first day of a brand new week. father, You know for many of us, it feels like the end of the week because we have poured out our heart, our soul; we've given everything we could possibly give to You this week when it comes to time, effort, and our money. You blessed Father. The reason we could do all that is because You already blessed us

in Christ, and You just made us aware of it. What a great opportunity we had to pour our lives into the life of three year olds through fifth graders, and what a blessing that was to us. Father, really it's not the end of the week. It's the beginning of a brand new week, and we believe now as we put Bible school in the rearview mirror, You want to remind all of us as adult, teens, youth, and children of the opportunities You will bring to us this week. As we continue to study Your Word during this July series about the freedom that we have in Christ, we pray that You open our eyes, Father, not in a preaching format this morning, but a teaching format. Open our eyes to the beauty and the wonder of the freedom that we truly have in Your Son Jesus Christ. Thank You Father that in His death, He paid the penalty of our sin. But thank You that in His life, He broke the power of sin so that sin could be defeated, condemned, and we can now live the life He lived. Father, when this message is over, let every believer go out of here knowing that it is possible in our marriage, parenting, and work life, for us to live like Christ, not just on a mission field or in another state, but right here in Calloway and Marshall counties in our day to day operation, we are free from the power of sin. Thank You Father for this walk You give us according to Your Spirit within us. Thank You for letting us study and see the evidence of Him this week with our kids. Now let us understand the beauty we have of truly living this thing out. It's in Your precious Son's name we pray, amen.

As I was starting this message last night really, really late, I read afresh Romans 8:1-4. I have to be honest with you; it has to be one of the greatest teachings in all of the Word of God. I know you get tired of hearing me say every time I preach that I think this may be the greatest verse, or the greatest chapter, or the greatest book in all of the Bible, but that's just our nature, is it not? If you watch the NBA finals at all in June, you know what we couldn't even concentrate on the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Golden Warriors without having to consider the question of who is the greatest of all time. Is it really LeBron, or is it Michael? Then we end June and go into July and the Tour De France starts, Wimbledon starts, and after having a child, Serena comes back, made it to the finals of

Wimbledon, and we're already debating is she the greatest female tennis player of all time. After today is over, our focus will turn to the British Open and it will come up again of who is the greatest golfer of all time. Is it really Jack Nicholas or is it Tiger Woods? We just can't help but compare things. I just want to make sure you understand; I believe this is one of the greatest teachings in all of the Word of God. I didn't say it was the greatest, but one of the greatest. When you think about you and I being believers in Jesus Christ and we think about the freedom that we have in Christ. Because of its greatness, I don't want to blur it this morning, not because of a lack of time, or a lack of study, but I just want you to see this in its simplicity. But in its simplicity, I also want us to see this in its depth.

You've heard me say many times that I cut my teeth on the King James Version of the Bible, so many times when I quote I mix the King James and the ESV. I can't help it. But we read this morning out of the ESV, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Did everybody hear that? If you are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation for you. Wow. I want to make sure you understand this. Sometimes when we take a foreign language and we bring it into our language, we have to rearrange the words, we have to add some words to make it smooth and understandable for us. In English, we are all about word order and smoothness. When Paul wrote to the church at Rome and he began this section, (which was not chapter 8:1 for him, that was added much later) and after Paul talks about this wretched body that he was living in as an unredeemed Pharisee and wondering who could set him free, coming to the conclusion that the only freedom that he could truly have is the freedom that God brought to him in Christ Jesus, he throws this thought out there: Myself? I will serve sin in my flesh, but with my mind, I will serve the law of God. Then he says no, (that's the first word) not there is therefore now no. This is not a little no; it's a big no. NO! No, therefore. Based on what he's just been teaching about, he wants you and I to know, no, therefore; now at this very moment, at this very time in your life as a part of the Roman church, especially those of you on the Jewish side who have been under the law and you're struggling because you just can't fathom that you're now under grace, not under law. So here's what he says, "No, therefore, now condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Now, that doesn't make sense to us, no, therefore, now condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So we smooth it out to say there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Do you get the point? If you are in Christ Jesus, at this very moment there is no condemnation. Now Paul doesn't say this, but I need to point this out to you. If you are not in Christ Jesus, you are condemned right now. You're not waiting to be condemned you're already condemned. But for those of us who are in Christ, based on what Paul has been teaching, there is no condemnation to us.

Now, I want to be really careful here, I don't want to step on anybody's toes, but if you and I would carefully go back and read Romans chapter 7, here's where we must get our definition and understanding of what Paul's talking about when he says there is therefore now no condemnation of those who are in Christ Jesus. In Romans chapter 7, Paul is not teaching about the penalty of sin. He's not teaching about when you die if you don't know Christ, you'll spend eternity separated from God forever and ever because you are under the death penalty. What he's talking about in Romans chapter 7 is that there was a time when we were in a marriage that wasn't good. Most of the time when people are in marriages that aren't good, they think the reason the marriage isn't good is because of the other person. I've never had anybody come to me as pastor and say I'm in a really, really bad marriage, it's all my fault. Would you tell me what I need to do differently? Would you help me? No, now sometimes people get to that conclusion and want help. Listen to what Paul says. He's writing to the side of the church that was raised under the law, and he says you used to be in a failed marriage. You were married to the law, and your husband, the law, was holy, just, and good. Now if you're a lady and sitting here thinking wow, what would it be like to be married to a husband who is holy, just, and good, I think we would all like to have a husband who is holy, just, and good. But the problem is that under the law, Jews being married to the law, the law was demanding. Perfection was the goal. All of a sudden, the Jews, especially Paul, in this passage he's speaking about himself as an unredeemed Pharisee, and he comes to understand that there's really not anything wrong with God's law. It's holy, just, and good, but I have a problem and it is I am carnal. I'm sold under sin. I'm a slave

to sin. I'm captive to sin. now he is writing as an unredeemed Pharisee who's trying to earn a right relationship by keeping the law, but he suddenly realizes the more he tries to meet the demands of the law, the more he can't meet the demands of the law. Finally, he throws up his hands and says what I really want to do, I can't do, and what I don't want to do, that's what I do. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine taking and having God's law in your mind, having this desire in your mind that you really want to serve God, but you suddenly realize that you are a slave to sin? You are fleshly, and everything that you really want to do, you can't do it completely. And everything that you don't want to do, those things you say you're never going to do again, before the week is over, you do it again? That's condemnation.

Don't read the doctrine of eternal security into this passage. We'll get to eternal security at the end of the chapter. The first of the chapter isn't dealing with eternal security and you not being condemned for the sins you commit because you're already forgiven in Christ. That's true, but that's not what this is teaching. What this is teaching you is right now, if you're in Christ Jesus, you are not under the condemnation of this, that you can't do what you want to do and you'll do what you don't want to do. Tell me you heard that. Why? Because there's been a death. See, Paul starts out Romans chapter 7 by referring to the law, and he refers to the law about how a woman, as long as she's married to a man, can't mess around with another man. If she does mess around with another man, she will be called an adulteress. The only way she can be free from her marriage to that man is for there to be a death of that man. If that man dies, then she's set free. Paul is teaching don't push this literally. Don't make Romans 7 about marriage. Make Romans 7 about the truth that the Jews were married to the law, and they could never have their Messiah unless there was a death. So guess who died...not the law, but the Messiah. When the Messiah died, He died for us. He died for the Jewish people. He died for the sin of the whole world, and when He died, it's possible for those whom He died for that were dead to be raised with Him, be made alive the moment you put your faith in Jesus. So that when you turn from sin, put your faith, and trust in Jesus, you literally experience the death of Jesus. When you literally experience the death of Jesus, you are now free from your first

marriage to the law of perfectionism and you now are married to Christ. When you're married to the law, he was holy, just, and good, but here's the problem. He could tell you what to do and what not to do, but he could never come alongside you and help you do what you didn't want to do and not do what you didn't want to do. He could say don't, don't, don't, do, do, do, do, but the law as your husband could never help you. Can you imagine being married to the law and then all of a sudden you wake up one morning after being spiritually made alive and now married to Christ, and for the first time in your life, you now have the power to not do what you've been doing? Wow. We used to sing a song in Trinidad that went, "Oh, what a change, oh, what a change, oh, what a change in my life. I've got Jesus on the inside, working on the outside, oh, what a change in my life." You are now married to husband number two, who is Jesus Christ, and God wants you to know that at this very moment, you are not condemned ever to live a life where you can't do what you want to do, and always do what you don't want to do.

Now, verse 2 is going to tell us why we're not condemned. Verse 2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you or me free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." 'For' is a connecting word in the Greek language, so Paul's now telling us why we're not condemned. You are not condemned because the spirit of life has set you free. 'Spirit' is capitalized. Most scholars, pastors, and linguists believe this is talking about the Holy Spirit of God.

Now notice, if you go back to Romans chapter 7:5-6, Paul gives us a thesis statement. Do you remember being in school and having to write a paper where you gave a thesis statement? When you give your thesis statement in the beginning, the rest of your paper is about you proving what you said in your thesis statement. As a matter of fact, the rest of the paper is graded on behalf of the thesis statement. If you turn in a paper where you don't accomplish what you say you're going to accomplish, I promise you that you will not get a good remark, no matter how excellently the paper may be written grammatically. Here's what Paul proposes. In Romans 7:5-6, he talks about the life we had in the flesh. When we're in the flesh, passions were aroused by the law and the fruit that was produced in our

life was death. Then he talks about this new kind of life we can have in the Spirit of God where we don't serve God under the flesh, but under a new written code and in the Spirit, and the fruit thereof is life. Here is what I propose to you; please take this seriously. Starting in verse 7 of Romans chapter 7 to the end of the chapter, it is talking about proving the first thesis statement, and that's how the law brings about death, and brings about condemnation. It basically brings you to understand you are a sinner, and on your own, if you have a habit in the flesh, if you have an addiction in your flesh, you'll never conquer it in your flesh because you don't have the power to break it. You're condemned to live a life you don't really want to live.

But starting in verse 1 of chapter 8, he switches to the second part of his thesis, and that's to show this changed life that comes to a person who is in Christ. What happens at the moment you and I put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ? We are regenerated. We receive the Holy Spirit of God, and He brings to us a brand new life. Does everybody agree? The Holy Spirit within you and me frees us at the moment of salvation from the law of sin and death. Now, when you read the law of the Spirit of life, and you read the law of sin and death, don't see law as a written code. Don't see it as the Mosaic Law. Law, many times is used to talk about a governing force, a governing power, or a governing influence. So the Bible is saying the controlling power of the Spirit of life has set us free in Christ Jesus from the controlling power, or the controlling influence, of sin and death. Does that make sense? Please tell me you see this. At the moment of salvation, you and I are set free from sin as a power in our life, so that sin is no longer the controlling force of our life. Why are we set free? Because we're now under a greater power, a greater principle, a greater force, if you will, a greater Person, if you will, and that is we're now under the power and the control of God's Holy Spirit, and He brings us a brand new nature. Because He brings to us a brand new nature, in Christ Jesus, you and I are free from the power of sin, and you're free from death. You are not separated from God anymore. Sin can't make you do anything! He's just expounding on what he said in Romans chapter 6 when he talks about how when we're baptized we identify our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Not only has Christ died, was buried, and rose again,

but we believe we actually died, was buried, and rose again with Him. We got up just like He got up. We didn't get up the same; we got up a brand new us, and that new us has been freed from sin, amen! We're dead to sin and alive to God, and therefore, we are free.

Listen to me; if you are a sinner, you're free to sin. You just sin all you want to. I'm going to quit arguing with you, I'm going to quit debating with you because we're living by two separate principles. You're going to continue to justify what you're doing as being ok. That's ok; justify it. You're a sinner. I get it. I understand. You're a sinner at your core nature; I get it. Listen to me; if you are a child of God, the Bible says you are a saint of His, and you are not free to sin. You're free not to sin. You're free to be holy. At the core of your very nature, you've been set apart, set apart from a life of sin to a life of salvation in Christ. With this life in Christ, you are free from sin. I don't want any of you husbands, wives, children, or any of us to ever say again when we make an excuse for sin, "You know me, that's just the way I am." No, I do know you, and that's not the way you are. You have been set free from habits, from addictions, from sin, in Christ Jesus. Amen!

Now, how does this work? look at verse 3, "For," again we have another one of those connecting words, "Therefore there is no condemnation...For the Spirit of life has set us free in Christ Jesus." That's the key, "in Christ Jesus." Based on the redeeming work of God in Christ, we have been set free from the power of sin. I want to use the KJV now because as much as I love the ESV, it misses it here. To make this smooth, the ESV says, "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." But the second word in our English sentence, "God," does not appear in the original sentence until halfway through the sentence, not at the beginning. That's important to me. Here's what Paul is trying to say, what the law could not do, God did. Do you see that difference? It is saying the same thing, except Paul is trying to say what the law couldn't do, what husband number one couldn't do, husband number two did. Why couldn't husband number one, the law, deal with us? because we're sinners, and all the law can do is set the standard, tell you

what's right and what's wrong, but there's no way a law that says thou shalt not steal, or shalt not kill, or shalt not covet, or honor your parents, can ever empower you to do what it's telling you to do, or to keep you from doing what it's telling you not to do. Why? Because the standard has been given to a people who have been weakened by the flesh, so we do not have the power to keep God's law. The more we live with the law, the more you realize how holy, just, and good the law is and the more you realize how sinful you are. Pretty soon, you get to the place where you just want to throw up your hands and say I can't do this! God says that's why I married you to husband number one, so that you would throw up your hands and say I can't do this, because at that moment, you look to the cross and see that what God did was send His own Son! Notice He didn't send Jesus, I mean He did send Jesus, but that's not what Paul says, He sent His own Son. The second person of Himself, with the Father always, left Heaven, and came to this earth.

Now catch this, Paul tells us in Philippians that He was made in the likeness of men. That means He is like us; He's a real man. The writer of Hebrews who I do not believe is Paul, some do, says that Jesus had to be made like His brothers so that He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest and to be tempted like us. Yet we know He didn't sin when He was tempted. Listen to Paul. I don't want to be controversial this morning; I just want you to think. In Romans chapter 6, Paul doesn't say that God sent His own Son in the likeness of flesh. He sent Him in likeness of sinful flesh. Wow. Scholars, Sunday school teachers, and pastors are always going to argue over what Jesus' flesh was like. Was it just like ours? Was it not like ours? Could He have really sinned? Could He not have sinned? How could He be God and man at the same time? If He is God, how could He be man and really be tempted? If He's man and can be tempted, how can He really be God? Please hear this; please don't sit here in a chair and believe this life of Christ was rigged. It wasn't. While He was unlike us, He was just like us. He did not have a nature to sin, but the Bible said He came in the likeness of a flesh that was sinful just like you and me. Do you know what He did in that flesh? He took that flesh, offered it on a cross to God, and He paid the penalty of your sin. But He also condemned sin in the flesh. I believe this is teaching that on the cross when God set us free, by the Spirit, from the

law of sin and death from both the power and the penalty of sin. Yes, on the cross Jesus paid your penalty, but before He ever paid the penalty of sin and hung on that cross and God took of our sin and put it on Jesus, for thirty-three and a half years, He lived in a body just like yours. He was tempted just like you, and never one time did He give into that temptation, not one time. By the time He got to that cross and laid His body down on the cross, He had taken a body like ours and defeated and condemned sin, and broke sin's power once and for all!

Now, how does that help you? It helps you because when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you actually receive the very life of Christ. You are now alive to God and dead to sin just like Him. You're no longer dead to God and alive to sin. You now have Christ life appropriated to you in all actuality. Wow! Yes, for you scholars this is a forensic concept, but it's a forensic concept that is real and it takes on flesh and blood, and it's lived out in your life and mine. Why would God do this? Why would God condemn sin in the flesh? Why would God ultimately put His Son on a cross to pay for the penalty of sin and break sin's power? Verse 4 says, "...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."

I want to point something out in the teaching format. This is not a preaching format and I don't want to offend anyone here, but if you read the KJV or other version that in verse 1 puts, "who does not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit," that's not in the original letter of Paul. The reason the King James says, "There is therefore now no condemnation of those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin, for those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit," that was added later. I don't know how or why, but it has caused a lot of misunderstanding. The misunderstanding is that we as Christians are not condemned, and it's actually possible for a Christian to walk according to the flesh. That's a lie. Please hear me. When you get to Romans 8:4, the Bible is not picturing a carnal believer and a spiritual believer. It is talking about being either in Christ, or you're not in Christ. Your walk, your life is either governed by the Spirit of God, or it's governed by your unredeemed flesh. If you're

governed by the Spirit of God, it doesn't mean you can't commit an act of sin, you can, but you can't continue in sin. You can't live a life of sin. Here's what's true.

Do you know why God did what He did to set you free? It is so that you could fulfil the righteous requirement of the law. Wow. In Romans 6, Paul has told us that we're not under law anymore; we're under grace. So some people believe when a church preaches grace that means you're lawless. The Bible says when you come under grace you're not lawless; you are lawful. You and I, walking according to the Spirit, having that evidence in us of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Do you know what happens to people who are giving that evidence? They fulfil the very standard of God. They fulfil the very life of God. They actually mirror God to society. Can I be honest with you? If in your core being that is your nature, that's what you really want to do. So when you get in that moment to where you have a choice to be holy and stand out, (which is what the word holy means, to stand out, be separate, be in a class all by yourself) or to go along with the crowd, you will not go along with the crowd. You can't because it's not who you are. You may take two or three steps toward that crowd, but about the third or fourth step in, you're going to be turning because you will realize that's not who you are.

If we had time and went down through the rest of the verses, Paul teaches if you walk according to the Spirit, you have the mind set on the Spirit. If you walk according to the flesh, you set your mind on the flesh. He says if you set your mind on the flesh and keep satisfying the desires of the flesh, you're going to die. It's not talking about physical death. It's talking about eternal death. You're going to be separated from God forever and ever. Can this be talking about a carnal believer? No, it's talking about an unbeliever, or we're going to have to give up our security of a true believer. It says if you set your mind on the Spirit, the end result is life and peace. Wow, you're free, but your flesh doesn't want you to know you're free because it has a mind of its own, and it's hostile to God. It wants to do its own thing and it really doesn't care who you hurt as long as you keep putting your flesh and yourself first. So many of you have been lied to.

You've been told as a believer that you can't get control over this. That's a lie! If you are a believer, you are free from the power of sin, just as you're free from the penalty of sin. Please believe this, and this week let's get sent out into the world and live free for others to see so that God might use us to bring His freedom to them too.