



Foundation of Faith

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NO CONDEMNATION

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Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to do the right thing, but somehow ended up doing wrong? Everyone has. Many Christians, in an attempt to understand their struggle with sin, have turned to Romans chapter 7 as an explanation for their moral dilemma.

"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is

present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, if it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:17-24)

There is a problem however with the conclusion that this passage is describing the Christian experience. The person being described here by Paul (the writer of the book of Romans) doesn't sound anything like a new creation in Christ. That's why it's so important to continue reading on to Romans 8:1-2; *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."*

*"There is therefore **NOW** no condemnation"* clearly shows us that what Paul had previously been talking about in the preceding verses of Romans 7, does not apply to those who are **NOW** in Christ Jesus. This is why the Bible instructs us to study to show ourselves approved unto God so that we can rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). If the Word of God can be rightly divided, then by implication, it can also be wrongly divided.

In chapter 7 Paul is describing his dilemma as a Jew, trying to live right before God under the old covenant and the law. The law however, was not designed for man to keep it. In actual fact God designed it to reveal the fallen spiritual state of man, in order that man could see himself in his true condition - hopeless and helpless without God and in desperate need of a saviour. That's why Jesus Christ came to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law on our behalf, so that His righteousness could then be credited to us! Glory to God!

IN CHRIST

I was raised in a religious family. We didn't just go to church every Sunday, we got there early and left there late! At age 12 or 13, I remember wondering about what I needed to do in order to secure a place in heaven. After talking to different people, I eventually concluded that if my good deeds outweighed my bad deeds, then I would make it to heaven. One day I set out to actually record everything I did that day under two columns, good and bad. I put a check mark in the good column for every good thing I did, and a check mark in the bad column for every wrong thing I did. Unfortunately for me, before the day was out, I had gotten into two fights, my school uniform got ripped, etc. Needless to say, my bad deeds far outweighed my good deeds that day and I felt so miserable!

My condition was exactly like that of Paul in Romans 7. The harder I tried, the deeper I sank into sin. Praise God however, for the good news in Romans 8; there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! All Paul had to do, all I had to do and all anyone else has to do, is to receive God's free gift of salvation in Christ. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* The old sinner is dead and gone, and a newly recreated person, with the nature of God, has been born.

God sees us only in Christ and that's the way He relates to us. He sees us in Christ and He sees Christ in us. The word 'Christ' is not Jesus' last name, it means 'the Anointed One'. That means that Jesus was anointed by God to be anything you need Him to be. Be it your saviour, healer, deliverer, provider, etc. He is everything you need Him to be to you. The

totality of all of God's abundance and all of His resources is stored in this huge depository called 'Christ'. You may find it hard to completely grasp all the implications of this awesome truth, but that's why we simply believe it and accept it by faith.

THE FLESH VS. THE SPIRIT

Yes, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, but only to those who don't walk (or live) according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. This means that even as a Christian you have the choice to either live according to your flesh (that is, your senses and feelings), or according to the leading of the Spirit of God who lives inside your human spirit.

Man is made up of three parts: he is a spirit, he has a soul, and he lives in a body. It is your spirit that is recreated in Christ at salvation, not your body or flesh. That's why it's possible for your flesh to want to do sinful things, and for your spirit to not want to do them. In Hebrews 4:12 it says *"The word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword piercing, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit"*. This reveals that the Word of God is powerful enough to go down into your heart (or spirit), rise up from in you and begin to cleanse your mind (or soul) and even affect your body.

If the enemy can get you to live according to the flesh and thereby bring you under condemnation, then he can paralyze your faith and render you ineffective. Most Christians I know are not looking for ways to sin and get away with it. We're not looking for a way to get as close to sin as possible and still be saved. We want to stay far away from sin.

Now Galatians 5 is very enlightening to our understanding in this area. Galatians 5:16-17, *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."* The Holy Spirit is teaching us here how to live in victory. Most Christians are trying to live the victorious life by trying not to sin. By trying hard not to do the wrong things, they hope they will somehow end up doing the right thing.

Two separate realms exist: the realm of the flesh and the realm of the spirit. If you are walking in one, you cannot be walking in the other. The key to a victorious life is not trying to stay away from walking in the flesh, in the hope that somehow or the other you'll wind up walking in the Spirit. Just as you have natural promptings for things like food, rest, etc., likewise you also have spiritual promptings. Learn to recognize and yield to those promptings. For example, you may feel a need to get more into the Word of God, or to spend some more time praying in the Holy Spirit. Endeavour to become more sensitive to the Spirit and obey His leadings promptly. And continually feed your human spirit in order to strengthen it, for if you starve

your spirit, its voice will grow weaker and weaker, and harder to discern.

Some Christians have felt spiritually hungry, with a prompting to take time to pray and feed on the word, but instead of doing that they respond by eating more *physical* food! Unfortunately, that's about the only kind of response they know. Whenever you feel God drawing your attention to an area of your life, make sure you deal with it promptly. Oftentimes, somebody else may be used to bring to your attention, the very area in which the Spirit has been dealing with you. Don't get offended at them when that happens, just take the correction and move on.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

When you walk in the Spirit you are starving the lust of the flesh, but if you yield yourself to the desires of the flesh, you will be starving your spirit. The two are contrary to one another.

For example, before you got saved, you might have hung out in the bars every Friday night. Now that you are saved, the real you inside, your spirit, that has been recreated in the image of God, doesn't want to do that anymore. But your flesh, which is not born again, wants to keep on doing what it has always done. At times, your flesh will throw a tantrum, just like a toddler, demanding to have its own way. No doubt resisting the desires of the flesh will be painful sometimes; nevertheless it is necessary if you want to live free of condemnation.

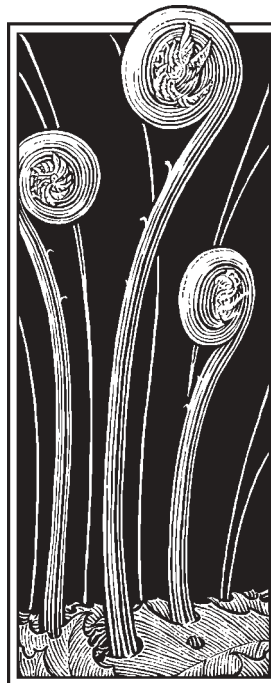
The Holy Spirit in you will never lead you to do anything that is wrong. The devil however, loves to hear people blame him for their actions - "The devil made me do it." The fact is, if you crucify your flesh, there is nothing the devil has to work with. He can't make you do anything. He can give you a suggestion. He can pressure you, but in the final analysis you have to be the one to say yes or no to him. You have to let your flesh know that now that you are born again, it has a new boss... your reborn spirit.

Just because I pastor a church doesn't mean I feel like going to church all the time, anymore than you feel like going to work all the time. My flesh and your flesh will give us every reason under the sun why we shouldn't do what we know we are supposed to do. Though my flesh with the devil's help, may be screaming at me, I still have the final say. I can choose to say yes or no. Saying no to the flesh is never pleasant or easy, but once I've said no and I choose to act accordingly, then the bad feelings will eventually leave and the good feelings from the spirit come up. Conversely, when you say yes to the flesh you feel good temporarily, but in the end feelings of condemnation, guilt, shame and regret, are the result.

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

Galatians 5:19-21 list the works of the flesh as follows,

"But now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which



I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." In other words, if you yield to the flesh, the flesh will lead you into any or all of the above.

Here is something to note about the flesh. After it has led you into something, a little bit of it is not going to satisfy you after a while. That's how people get hooked on things like pornography, drugs or alcohol. Nobody ever sets out to become an alcoholic. They never say, "I am going to become an alcoholic today." They start out confidently, claiming to know exactly where their limit is. Only to find out after it's too late, that they've gone down the road of no return and they're in serious trouble!

It's important to remember that Galatians 5 was written to Christians, not unbelievers. In other words, even though you are a Christian who loves God and you have the Spirit of God in you, it is possible to yield yourself to the lusts of the flesh. Idolatry is a work of the flesh and many Christians have idols.

Their idol might not be an image made out of wood, plastic, or metal. It could be their possessions, wealth, career, a loved one... anything that has a higher priority in their life than God does, and to which they devote their attention. The Bible tells us that God is a jealous God, and He wants our undivided attention.

Do you know that your attitude towards money reveals your attitude towards God? To put it another way, your attitude towards money and everything money can buy reveals your attitude towards God. The Bible says in 1 John 2:15, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"*. Matthew 6:24 tells us that, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (riches)."* You cannot serve God and money. If money is your idol and you love money and the things it can buy, that simply means that you don't love God.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Verse 21 of Galatians 5 warns of the consequences of yielding to the flesh. Those who produce the works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. Not inheriting the kingdom of God implies not enjoying the blessings of the kingdom. Praise God however, reading further along in Galatians 5 brings us to the good news of the fruit of the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Verses 22-23).

The fruit of the Spirit is love, followed by joy, leading up to a total of nine fruit of the Spirit. In verse 19, the works of the flesh are plural, but the fruit of the Spirit is singular. By this the Bible is telling us that the fruit is a cluster, and love will lead you into all the other fruit. Love, being the first fruit that you should show after salvation, is also the parent fruit that will lead to the development of all the other fruit of the Spirit.



THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST

What does it mean, when the scripture says in Galatians 5:23, that *"against such (the fruit of the Spirit) there is no law"*? To answer this we must look again at Romans 8:1-2 where we began our study;

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

The law of sin and death has been in the earth since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is responsible for poverty, for misery, for sickness and disease and all of the devil's work in the earth. When we become born again and come into the new covenant with God through Jesus, we can now live by another law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. No longer do we

have to be subject to the law of sin and death and all its consequences.

In order to understand this better, picture a truck and a cargo airplane. We all know that a truck cannot fly. Supposing however, you drove the truck into that aircraft, it could take off and fly with the truck on board. Obviously the law of gravity affects everything on this planet including the plane and the truck. The plane however, has been designed in such a way that it is able to engage a law other than the law of gravity, the law of lift. The fact that the plane flies does not mean that the law of gravity has stopped acting on it. The law of gravity continues its operation, but the plane has simply engaged a higher law, the law of lift, which supersedes the effect of gravity.

This law of lift perfectly illustrates what the law of the Spirit of life in Christ can do for us. Just as the truck can stay in the sky because it is inside the plane, likewise, those who are in Christ Jesus, can rise above the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is still in operation, but those who are in Christ can engage a higher law, the law of the Spirit of life, and rise above the law of sin and death. We can engage that law and free ourselves from the effects of the law of sin and death which reigns here on earth, by walking in the Spirit. Daily we can choose to obey the Word of God and choose to yield to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, rather than yield to the desires of our flesh. That is why the Bible tells us to crucify the flesh.

And so we see that Galatians 5:23 is saying that nothing can succeed against the person who walks in the Spirit and produces the fruit of the Spirit. There is no greater law than the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. Nothing can come against the fruit of love, joy, peace, etc., and render it ineffective. And love can never fail.

CONDEMNATION WILL ROB YOU OF CONFIDENCE

1 John 3:18-20, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." The Holy Spirit never condemns you when you sin or make a mistake. It is your own spirit, your heart that condemns you. Deep down in you, the Holy Spirit is trying to encourage you and let you know that you are forgiven so you can move on.

Reading on in 1 John 3, verse 21-22, we find that our source of confidence before God is the fact that He does not condemn us; "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Doing those things that are pleasing in His sight enables us to ask and receive with confidence from God.

Satan is a thief and one of the things he comes to steal is our confidence. That's how he defeats many Christians, by robbing them of their confidence with feelings of condemnation. Many prayers have been rendered ineffective as believers have lost their confidence in prayer. The devil whispers in their ears, "What makes you think God is going to answer your prayer, after all the bad things you've done? You're such a lousy Christian." The truth is that even without Satan's input, it's part of man's fallen nature to beat himself down.

CONCLUSION

Condemnation will age you, weigh you down in misery, and even make you sick. It will cause you to lose your confidence before God and hinder your prayers. Regardless of how many times you have failed, how many times you have blown it, the blood of Jesus is powerful enough to cleanse you from all sin. His blood will not only cleanse you from sin, but from the consciousness of sin and also free you from all condemnation. Hallelujah! No more condemnation for you and no more condemnation for me! No more condemnation for anyone in Christ Jesus who chooses to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. The choice is yours.

Tape Offer

An audio cassette copy of Pastor Okutinyang's message, is available upon request for \$6.00 (postage included).



If you have been blessed by this issue of **Foundation of Faith**, or have just prayed to receive Jesus as your Saviour, we would like to hear from you. **Your prayers and financial support of this ministry would be greatly appreciated.**

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Salvation Prayer

If you would like to receive Jesus as your Saviour, pray the following prayer sincerely from your heart: Dear heavenly Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus. You said in Your word, "...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, YOU WILL BE SAVED" (Romans 10:9). I do believe with my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe He was raised from the dead for my justification. Your word says, "...it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:10). I do believe with my heart, and I now confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord. Therefore, I am saved! Thank You Lord!

To grow in your new Christian life, it is important to study the Bible and to pray every day to your Heavenly Father. You also need to belong to a good, Bible-believing church where you can be taught the Word of God.



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