

**Romans (35):
No condemnation for the ones being sanctified**

Introduction

To begin today let us review the last verses of Romans 7 before proceeding into Romans 8. Here, toward the end of Romans 7, Paul, the Christian, expressed his own great struggle with sin even as he attempted to conform his life to the law of God. Let us consider the details of these verses before us in Romans 7:13-25.

We see first that Paul exonerated the law from being responsible for his misery. It was sin, not the law, that was the cause of his problems. **Verse 13** reads, *“Did that which is good (i.e. the law), then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.”* Here we see the preparatory work of the law of bringing a sinner to Christ. God uses His law to show sinners that they are sinners, even to show them that they are great sinners. God first reveals to His loved ones that they are deserving of and subject to His judgment of them due to their sin. The sinner must first understand that he is a sinner, who is without ability or desire to change.

Paul expressed God’s use of the law in a similar manner elsewhere. In Galatians we read of God’s reason that He gave His law as a covenant to Israel. It was to prepare that nation for the need and reception of Jesus their Messiah.

¹⁹What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²²But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Gal. 3:19-25)

God had given His law as a *covenant* to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. The purpose was preparatory, to prepare Israel for their recognition and reception of their Messiah. It revealed and convinced them of their sinfulness. Israel had incurred God’s curse of the law through its rebellion. The nation then came to look for the coming of its Savior. Now, once Christ came, there was no longer the need for the law as a covenant (cf. Gal. 3:25). Christ instituted His new covenant with the remnant of Israel that came to faith in Him. And so, the law is no longer in effect as a covenant, although God continues to use His law to reveal sin to both unbelievers and believers (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16).

The reason that Paul was certain of his argument in verse 13 was due to **verse 14**: *“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.”* Some have argued that this could *not* be said of a regenerate (born again) person. But this is incorrect. Paul is asserting that it is the law of God that is holy, righteous and good, and that he is not those things. Here he is simply saying that he is subjected to an alien power that seeks to control him. Sin has purchased him as a slave owner has purchased a slave in the market, subjecting the slave to himself. It is Paul the Christian who is laboring under this misery.

Paul next expresses his own frustration trying to live as a Christian. ***“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate”*** (7:15). Here again, he is describing what he desires, that is to live in conformity to God’s law, but he is frustrated and struggles to do so. He does the things he hates. Of the non-Christian, on the other hand, it can be said that when he sins, he does the things that he loves, not hates.

Since this was Paul’s attitude toward himself when sinning, then he is confirming by his own desires for living righteously that God’s law is good and not to be faulted as the cause of his misery. His sin is the problem. We read in **verse 16**, ***“Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.”*** Paul was still attempting to vindicate God’s law against any misunderstanding or false accusation that the law was defective. He was defective, not God’s law, which was perfect.

Then we read of Paul’s Christian faith expressed in **verse 17**, ***“So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”*** This is Paul who has applied the command of Romans 6:11 to his own life. It reads, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). Paul then proceeds to express his own frustration and quandary:

18For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Paul took responsibility for his sinful actions. Even though that he could say as a Christian that it was not his true self that moved him to live contrary to the law of God, he declared that he knew that in his “flesh” no good thing dwelled. What is meant by “flesh” in this context? He is speaking of the sin principle that was still with him, even in him.

Several things can be said about Paul’s “flesh.”

(1) The flesh is wholly sinful—no good thing dwells in it. (2) The flesh is still associated with his person—the flesh is *his* flesh and it is in *him*. (3) Sin is also associated with his person, for it is in his flesh that sin inheres.¹

Paul affirmed the statement that he had already asserted. ***“Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me”*** (v. 20). He then stated the principle that is true of every true believer: ***“So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand”*** (v. 21). Evil always lies close at hand. As sin was crouching at the door of Cain as a ravenous beast, desiring to thrust itself into his house and overwhelm him, so sin is ever present, even in us, which should call forth our diligence and resolve not to yield to its enticements. God had said to Cain:

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” (Gen. 4:7)

Paul the Christian wrote of his own struggle against sin. **Verse 23** reads, ***“but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.”*** Paul struggled to live righteously before God. Spiritual warfare is the common lot of the Christian. The Christian life is one of continuous struggle. “The law of my mind” would be God’s law that he serves with his mind (cf. v. 25). The law of sin is the principle of sin that resides in every Christian. Warfare is the course of life for the Christian. (cf. Ephesians 6).

¹ Murray, p. 263.

Paul then expressed the intensity of his struggle in **verse 24**: ***“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”*** This was not a plea for the forgiveness of sins, for God had already forgiven him His sins when God had justified him through faith alone. Here Paul expressed his longing to be delivered from the power of indwelling sin. He desired to see his sanctification realized. And he knew that this could be achieved through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He longed to be delivered from the sin that dwelled within him. This caused him to look afresh to Jesus Christ, who would one day deliver him from the presence of sin. ***“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*** (7:25). Here is optimism. Here is faith. Here is his hope.

Paul then provided a concluding statement to this chapter, ***“So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin”*** (Rom 7:25). Paul the Christian stated that He served the law of God with his mind. The law of God was his rule of life. Even as he struggled with sin that would pull him downwards and defeat him, He delighted in God’s law and purposed to serve it with his mind, his essential self.

Those who claim that the Christian has nothing to do with God’s law, but God’s grace only, should consider carefully Paul’s words. He did not despise God’s law; he loved God’s law. And as a Christian he sought to serve God’s law. But even with this godly desire, he struggled with the sin that was in him.

We now arrive to Romans 8. The subject continues to be that of the believer’s sanctification. But Paul changes his theme from the law of God and the believer’s sanctification to the role of the Holy Spirit who enables believers to live righteously before God. Let us read the first paragraph, Romans 8:1-8.

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [***who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*** (NKJV)]². ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For 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, ⁴in 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.*** ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (ESV)

I included the clause from the KJV and the NKJV at the end of verse 1 that is not found in the English Standard Version, the text that we have used as a basis for our study of this epistle. I did so for the sake of explaining some issues and principles about textual studies, which involves determining what reading was most likely originally penned by the apostle Paul. This verse is suitable to illustrate some of the issues. And so, I would like us to step aside for a few minutes from the argument of the epistle and consider the text itself that Paul wrote and has been transmitted to us through the centuries.

When we speak of the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture, we are specifically referring to the original documents, called autographs, that were penned by the biblical writers. We believe that God has preserved through His providence the substance of those original writings. Here is a statement from our confession of faith:

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right

² I.

unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. (Romans 3:2; Isaiah 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39; 1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28; Colossians 3:16)³

Although only the original autographs were directly inspired of God, the subsequent copies were providentially preserved by God so as to give us a faithful Bible today. Moreover, through the discovery and use of many older manuscripts, and more consistently applied principles of interpretation, I would argue that the Greek text of the New Testament today is closer to the originals than at any time since the first centuries of the Christian era. We have been given a trustworthy text by God's providence upon which our modern translations are based. However, textual scholars continue to have to make determinations between differing readings of manuscripts, attempting to assess what was the original. An understanding of the history of manuscript transmission will help us in this matter.

Johannes Gutenberg invented the "modern" printing press with moveable type in 1439. The first Greek New Testament was printed in 1516, having been edited by **Desiderius Erasmus**. Prior to this printing of the Greek New Testament, all copies of the New Testament had been produced by the hand of scribes. A scribe was a noble trade for many centuries.

Today we have close to 6,000 Greek manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament that were produced prior to the invention of the printing press. Because of the nature of the scribal work and the kind of errors that were commonly made in the scribal process, there are no two Greek manuscripts identical with one another. There are variant readings in every manuscript, which are readings that differ from the parallel passages in other texts. Now it should be understood that the vast majority of these are of minor importance, most being spelling errors that were made by scribes. It should also be recognized that if you were able to identify two texts of the New Testament that were the most different from one another in detail, there would still be no difference between them respecting the content of their teaching. No major doctrine, even minor doctrine, is affected by the presence of variants in the manuscript tradition.

By the way, our discussion here is only with regard to our New Testament manuscripts, not the Old Testament. The Old Testament Jewish scribes were much more careful and diligent in their copying of the Old Testament texts than were the Greek and Latin scribes who copied the New Testament books. The transmission of the Old Testament text warrants another discussion on another occasion.

But the point is this, today we have no original documents, but only copies of copies and no two copies are alike. It is the task of textual critics to make determinations between differing readings so as to determine which reading was likely to have been in the original document.

Now it is helpful to understand the process that scribes used when copying their manuscripts. Variants between copies of the Greek New Testament can be assessed when the process of copying manuscripts is understood. Scribes would commonly work as individuals, copying their texts as they looked upon the master text on the desk before them. Many scribes in monasteries performed their work in this manner for many centuries. Scribal work was hard work. Consider this description of the trade:

Something of the drudgery of copying manuscripts can be learned from the colophons, or notes, which scribes not infrequently placed at the close of their books. A typical colophon found in many non-Biblical manuscripts reveal in no uncertain terms what every scribe experienced: 'He who does not know how to write supposes it to be no labor; but though only three fingers write, the whole body labors.' A traditional formula appearing at the close of many manuscripts describes the physiological effects of prolonged labour at copying: 'Writing bows one's back, thrusts the ribs into one's stomach, and fosters a general debility of the body.' In an Armenian manuscript of the Gospels a colophon complains that a heavy snowstorm was raging outside and that the scribe's ink froze, his hand became

³ **The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**, Art. 1, par. 8.

numb, and the pen fell from his fingers! It is not surprising that a frequently recurring colophon in manuscripts of many kinds is the following comparison: ‘As travelers rejoice to see their home country, so also is the end of a book to those who toil [in writing].’ Other manuscripts close with an expression of gratitude: ‘The end of a book; thanks be to God.’⁴

However, even though the labor was difficult, the scribe valued his work, particularly those who copied the Holy Scriptures. Here is a description of the attitude of many:

By reading the divine Scriptures [the scribe] wholesomely instructs his own mind, and by copying the precepts of the Lord he spreads them far and wide. What happy application, what praiseworthy industry, to preach unto men by means of the hand, to untie the tongue by means of the fingers, to bring quiet salvation to mortals, and to fight the Devil’s insidious wiles with pen and ink! For every word of the Lord written by the scribe is a wound inflicted on Satan. And so, though seated in one spot, the scribe traverses diverse lands through the dissemination of what he has written... Man multiplies the heavenly words, and in a certain metaphorical sense, if I may dare so to speak, three fingers are made to express the utterances of the Holy Trinity. O sight glorious to those who contemplate it carefully! The fast-traveling reed-pen writes down the holy words and thus avenges the malice of the Wicked One, who caused a reed to be used to smite the head of the Lord during his Passion.⁵

Commonly, however, rather than scribes laboring in monasteries, they performed their transcribing work in scribal schools, which were business ventures, for texts were very expensive and relatively rare. The scribe in a scribal school would often sit at a desk in a room, with many other scribes. They would write out their text as the master scribe overseeing their work read it to them. As the text was read, the scribe would write what he heard.

Now when one examines variants from Greek text to Greek text, one can assess in many cases the likely original cause of the variant being first penned. Variants can commonly be judged to be either the result of a faulty *hearing* or faulty *sight* on the part of the scribe.⁶ For example, if the scribe was sitting at his desk and was writing his text as the master scribe read the text, errors of hearing would frequently occur. These would often be spelling errors. For example, in the Greek language there are vowels and combination of vowels that often had a similar or even identical sound.⁷ Just as in English we have words like “great” and “grate”, “there” and “their”, so in Greek there are words that sound identical but are spelled differently.

When the scribe was performing his work alone, copying a manuscript that was before him, errors of faulty sight were commonly introduced to the text. This is what we have in Romans 8:1 with the additional clause that is included in the KJV and the NKJV. What most likely happened was that the scribe was copying his text, looking back and forth from his master to his copy. When he had copied the end of verse 1, he looked back to his master, but his eye fell upon the words at the end of verse 4, which reads, “*who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*”, when he returned to his copy, he inadvertently copied those words from the end of verse 4 to the end of verse 1. When his eye returned to the master, he continued to copy at the beginning of verse 2. The result was the clause of verse 4 is also found identically in verse 1. This is a typical variant being caused by faulty sight.

⁴ Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament; Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 17f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶ There were scribes who made intentional changes to the text they were copying, but that is another matter for another time.

⁷ A “diphthong” is when two vowels are together in a word that combines to make one sound. We have diphthongs in English, such as words with the combination of vowels, “ae,” “ai,” “ou,” “eu.” In Greek there are several different spelled diphthongs that apparently all had the same sound, some believe to have been a long “ee” sound. This is a source of many variants in New Testament Greek manuscripts.

One more word may be helpful for us before moving onward, there are a number of evangelicals who espouse that the King James Version of the English Bible is the only translation that God has preserved without error to the present day. The Greek text that stands behind the KJV is commonly known as the *Textus Receptus*, which some claim to be the only inerrant Greek text available to us. But the term, *Textus Receptus*, was not ascribed to a Greek text until 1633, 117 years after Erasmus published the first edition of his Greek New Testament in 1516. The term, *Textus Receptus*, was actually a publisher's promotion of the text in the book's preface. Here is an account of how the term came into use:

In 1624 the brothers Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, two enterprising printers in Leiden, published a small and convenient edition of the Greek Testament, the text of which was taken mainly from Beza's smaller 1565 edition. The preface to the second edition, which appeared in 1633, makes the boast that "[the reader has] the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted'. Thus from what was a more or less casual phrase advertising the edition (what modern publishers might call a 'blurb'), there arose the designation 'Textus Receptus', or commonly received, standard text. Partly because of this catchword the form of the Greek text incorporated in the editions that Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzevirs had published succeeded in establishing itself as 'the only true text' of the New Testament, and was lavishly reprinted in hundreds of subsequent editions. It lies at the basis of the King James Version and all the principle Protestant translations in the languages of Europe since 1881. So superstitious has been the reverence accorded the Textus Receptus that in some cases attempts to emend it have been regarded as akin to sacrilege. Yet its textual basis is essentially a handful of late and haphazardly collected miniscule manuscripts, and in a dozen passages its readings is supported by no known Greek witness.⁸

God's providential preservation of His Word to us is an interesting story. If you desire to read an excellent book that addresses the full history of the transmission of the New Testament, I recommend the book by **Bruce Metzger**, *The Text of the New Testament*.⁹

Let us now return to our text, giving attention to its meaning and its place in the flow of the argument of the epistle. **Romans 8:1**. It reads, "***There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***" "Condemnation is the opposite of justification (cf. 5:16; 8:34) and justification implies the absence of condemnation."¹⁰ Paul expressed himself through the use of the negative statement, "There is now therefore no condemnation", in order to affirm in the strongest terms the exoneration of believers in Jesus Christ, to free them from any doubt that God has forgiven them of their sins and that they will never encounter God's wrath due to their sin. Those who are in Jesus Christ are safe and secure. This is so because Christ had atoned for their sin in His death on their behalf. He had paid the debt to God's justice that His people owed to their God for having transgressed His law.

Paul uses a conjunction, the word, "therefore", to show that his statement is a conclusion drawn from what went before. But if the truth, that there is now no condemnation, is a statement that affirms the believers' justification only, one might question why it is located here in Romans 8:1, being linked to what had just been addressed in chapter 7, for chapter 7 addressed the believer's sanctification, not his justification. It would seem that this statement would have been most fitting after the conclusion of Romans 5, at the conclusion of Paul's treatment of justification, just before he began to address the believer's sanctification beginning with Romans 6. But this is God's word, and the Holy Spirit moved Paul to place this verse here at Romans 8:1 for a reason. It is for us with the Holy Spirit's assistance, therefore, to determine why it is here and expressed in this way.

⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

⁹ The source is identified above in footnote #4.

¹⁰ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans, vol. 1* (Eerdmans, 1959), p. 274.

The answer to the issue may be stated in this way. When Paul declared that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, he was declaring that not only are believers not condemned because of their justification by God's grace (Rom. 3:21-5:21), but also because they were being sanctified by His grace (Rom. 6:1-7:25). Not only can the penalty due our sin condemn us, but the power of sin would also have spelled our doom had not God provided for us our sanctification in Jesus Christ. **John Murray** set forth the matter clearly:

If the apostle is thinking merely of freedom from the guilt of sin and from the condemnation which guilt entails, then we should have to find the basis of the inference in that part of the epistle which deals particularly with that subject (3:21-5:21). But if there is included in freedom from condemnation not only deliverance from the guilt of sin but also from its power, then the "therefore" could be related quite properly to what immediately precedes (6:1-7:25) as well as to the more remote context. It is in this latter alternative which the evidence would appear to demand. The word "condemnation" here can scarcely be interpreted apart from the immediately succeeding context in which it appears and so we must look for the specific complexion given to the words by this context to which it is so clearly related. In this context, as will be shown later, the apostle is not dealing with justification and the expiatory aspect of Christ's work but with sanctification and with what God has done in Christ to deliver us from the power of sin. Hence what is thrust into the foreground in the terms "no condemnation" is not only freedom from the guilt but also freedom from the enslaving power of sin. If this appears to be a strange notion in connection with "condemnation" we shall have to wait for a vindication of this concept in the exposition of the verses that follow. If, however, this view of "condemnation" is adopted, then this verse, as inference, can be connected with what immediately precedes, either restrictedly (7:25) or more inclusively (6:1-7:25). The latter alternative is preferable, as will appear later on.¹¹

The point is this: Christ through His death saves us from the just condemnation of our *sins* (plural; actual transgressions); Christ through His life saves us from the condemnation of our *sin* (singular; sinful nature). God saves us through our justification from the condemnation for our *sins*; God saves us through our sanctification from the condemnation of our *sin* within us. This is consistent with what Paul wrote earlier in Romans 5:10, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

In **verses 2** through **4** Paul explains why it is there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Verses 2-4 as a whole explain the reason (note the Greek *gar*, for in verse 2) that condemnation no longer exists for those in Christ. The argument of the text is that condemnation is no longer a reality "because" (Greek "*gar*") believers are delivered from the power of sin. The argument of the text as a whole can be summarized as follows. Those in Christ are no longer under the condemnation of sin (v. 1) because in Christ they have been freed from the power of sin, so that they are now able to fulfill the law. Those who limit Romans 8:1-4 to forensic (i.e. legal) categories fail to perceive the connection drawn in the text between judicial and dynamic realities; those freed from the curse of the law are now liberated to keep God's commands.¹²

We read in **verse 2**, "***For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.***" The "law of the Spirit of life" is a reference to the Holy Spirit. He is described as the "Spirit of life" for the Holy Spirit is the giver and sustainer of life. "The law of the Spirit of life" is, therefore, the power of the Holy Spirit operative in us to make us free from the power of sin which is unto

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 274f.

¹² Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 399.

death.”¹³ When Paul refers to “the law” of the Spirit of life, he was speaking to the guidance and direction that the Spirit gives to believers through the law.

Now Paul uses the term “law” twice in verse 2. There are many who argue that the first use of the word of “law” in verse 2 is metaphorical, as it is linked to the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ They say the second use of the word, “law”, refers to the Mosaic law. But others assert that in both cases Paul was referring to the Mosaic law. I believe that this is the correct understanding.¹⁵

Although it is difficult to be certain, the idea that the Mosaic law is intended in both uses of the word **νόμος** (*nomos*- “law”) in verse 2 is more probable. According to this construction, the Mosaic law is in the realm either of the Holy Spirit or of the powers of sin and death. If the law is appropriated in the realm of the Spirit and by faith, then one is liberated from using the Mosaic law in such a way that it leads to sin and death. This in no way contradicts chapter 7, for there Paul speaks of the effect that the law has on one without the Spirit. Without the Spirit the law only produces death. But for those who have the Spirit the law plays a positive role. This fits with the conception of the law in Psalm 119 and Psalm 19:7-11, where the Torah restores and revives the godly. Thus the second use of **νόμος** in the verse also relates to the Mosaic law. For those who have the Spirit, the Mosaic law liberates from the law that produces only “sin and death.”¹⁶

I would argue that this understanding would also be consistent with the role of the law as a positive good and a rule of life for the believer in the **Epistle of James**. There we read,

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵***But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*** (James 1:22-25)

And,

⁸If you really fulfill ***the royal law*** according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; ⁹but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. ¹¹For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹²So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:8-12)

James wrote of the christian being “blessed” in keeping God’s law. It is the “royal law”, the standard by which Jesus Christ governs the kingdom of God and the standard that will one day assess our lives to prove or disprove our claim to be true believers.

We next read **verses 3 and 4**. ***“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.*** The law of God apart from the Spirit of God could not transform people so that they could live righteously, live consistently with the holy standard that the law of God reflects. Here Paul gives the reason that God sent His Son was so that His people would be enabled to

¹³ Murray, vol. 1, p. 276.

¹⁴ Schreiner, p. 399.

¹⁵ This Schreiner’s position, but in contradiction to Moo, Dunn, and others. Ibid., p. 400.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 400.

live according to His law. If you bring the law of God into contact with an unconverted sinner, it will aggravate his sinfulness and condemn him in his sin. But if you bring the law of God to bear upon the converted sinner, who has been given new life in the Holy Spirit, then it will provide him a course of life that will result in God's blessing upon him. Here in these verses Paul was stating that the reason God sent His Son into the world was to enable His people to be law keepers through the holy Spirit that is given to them.

The law has no power to transform a person, but only condemn him. But the Holy Spirit can enable the one who is united to Jesus Christ to live according to the standard of the righteous requirements of the law. And so, here again, Paul is asserting the power of God through the Holy Spirit as given to those in Christ Jesus, to become sanctified in their lives. God has made all things available to us that are necessary for us to live as godly men and women, we who truly believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Amen.