

# lincolnberean

**DATE:** May 3, 2026  
**SERIES:** The Gospel Is  
**MESSAGE:** Life in the Power of the Spirit  
**PASSAGE:** Romans 8:1-17  
**SPEAKER:** Ryan Harmon

Last week, we encountered the desperate cry of a frustrated man, the apostle Paul, coming to terms with the fact that the law was incapable of setting him free, and that his own flesh—his own human incapacities, his own fleshliness—prevented him from living the life that he had been given in Christ. He cried out, “Wretched man that I am, who will set me free?” Who will set me free?

To cry that, I am sure, is familiar to every person in this room who has sought to step into the fullness of the life that has been made available to us in Christ Jesus. Wretched man, desperate man that I am, who will set me free? Fortunately for us, Romans does not end in chapter 7. We get to turn the page to chapter 8. And in chapter 8, we find an answer to that very question. So open your Bibles with me to Romans chapter 8, to a chapter that is objectively considered one of the most glorious chapters in all of scripture. Romans chapter 8.

Now as we begin, Paul, as he so often does throughout Romans, Paul is going to begin by recapping what he has already said. See, the reality of the gospel, as Paul has explained it, is so wonderful. It seems as though every corner that we turn, we encounter a new truth about the gospel. And Paul does just the same as he begins Romans 8. He takes us back to the very foundation, the foundation of the gospel, the beating heart of the gospel, the foundation upon which our life of faith can be built. That’s where he begins in Romans 8, verse 1. He says:

*1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Therefore, there's now no condemnation. For those who are in Christ Jesus, if you are inclined to memorize scripture, I would encourage you, memorize this verse. If you are not inclined to memorize scripture, I would encourage you—be so inclined! This is a fantastic verse to start with. I guarantee by the end of the evening, you could have this one committed to memory. “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Therefore. In other words, based on everything that Paul has been saying, if we go all the way back to the beginning of Romans, Paul has been unpacking the reality of our need for the gospel and the truths of the gospel. Based on all that he has said, there is now no condemnation.

Now, in using that word, Paul has taken us back to Romans chapter 5, that's the last time that word condemnation has occurred in Romans. Romans chapter 5. Now, I'm sure you don't recall all that we talked about, that was quite a few weeks ago, so let me remind you. In Romans chapter 5, Paul outlines the two lives that are lived in this world—the in-Adam life caught up in sin, in bondage, or the life that is in Christ. All of us are born into Adam. He represents us. His sin brought judgment upon us all, and somehow in a mysterious way, we all were present, we all are guilty of sin, in Adam.

But Romans 5 outlines there is life in Christ. Paul uses this word condemnation two times in chapter 5. Let me read to you the second time he uses it. Romans 5, verse 18 says this. It says, “So then, as through one transgression, through one sin, there resulted condemnation to all men. Even so, through one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men.” In Adam, there is



# lincolnberean

condemnation, a declaration of guilt, a verdict of guilty facing the reality of sin in each one of our lives. That is what all of us, apart from Christ, stand under. We are condemned. We are guilty. That's the verdict of the judgment. But Paul said through the righteous act of one man of Jesus Christ, there is available justification, a declaration of righteousness, to all people.

So we said back when we were in Romans 5, the gospel is justification by faith, our being declared righteous on the merits of Jesus Christ. All we bring to the table is we trust, we step out in faith. This is the foundation of the gospel. Everything that we say after this, in terms of living the Christian life, depends upon us grasping and holding dear to this very truth. In Christ, we have been made alive. Therefore, Paul says, there is now no condemnation. Justified. Guilty no longer. No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The verdict has already been declared over us. Because of Christ, and because we have placed our faith in Christ, we are now justified. We are no longer condemned, and that is very good news in a world that seeks to make us feel less than, and make us feel ashamed everywhere we go.

Satan certainly would love for each one of us to feel today that we still somehow are condemned, but the truth is laid bare right here in verse 1 of chapter 8. There is no condemnation. No condemnation. Now, for those of us who are in Christ Jesus, memorize it, hold it, dear, dwell upon it. What a great way to start your day, to get out of bed and say, oh, here we are, Lord—another day in which there is no condemnation. I stand righteous before you, free to live life before you now, in relationship with you, because of the work of Jesus Christ. There is no condemnation. No condemnation for those of us in Christ Jesus. That's what God has done for you and for me in Jesus Christ.

Now here is how he did it. Verse 2, he says:

*2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

There is no condemnation. We are no longer under a judgment, a verdict of guilty. And we have been set free. No longer in bondage. That's the main point. But we do need to talk about some of the details because of this word "law" that Paul uses here in verse 2.

You'll recall last week that law was a main point of discussion. It was a main topic. And last week when we were discussing the law, we were talking specifically about the Mosaic law, the law of Moses, the Old Testament law. But you'll notice here that in your translation, that word "law" in verse 2 is either spelled with a lower case "l," or maybe it's a different word altogether. I think the NIV says "power." That's our translators trying to help us understand there is a distinction here in verse 2.

Most often with Paul, the word law means the Old Testament law, but what is clear is that here he's talking about law in a more general sense. Law as a general principle of life. The way things are. A power that governs life. Using it in the same way that we might use the word in the phrase, "the law of gravity." When we say the law of gravity, we're saying there is a way that gravity works. There is a power of gravity that orders things, that governs things. That's the sense that Paul is using that word law here.

So what he's saying in verse 2 is that the law of the Spirit of life, this new governing principle of the Spirit, has set us free, has given us a new way of life. There is a new manager in town. A new sheriff has come in. And everything has changed. Everything has changed for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. And this new way of the Spirit stands in stark contrast to the old way, the old law of sin and death. If you're in Christ, you're no longer condemned, and you have been set free. Set free, you now live under new management. A new governing principle of life is now in charge. There's a new



# lincolnberean

sheriff in town, and the law of sin and death have been put away. We have been broken free from that way of life. He continues in verse 3, he says:

*3 For what the Law [now capital L, you'll notice, for what the Law] could not do, weak as it was through the flesh,*

So now he's returning to the Old Testament law, and we talked about this last week. Remember that Paul said last week, the law, the Old Testament law, he said, was holy and righteous and good. But, it was sabotaged by sin, hijacked by sin, taken advantage of by sin. Not only that, but it also ran into the problem of our fleshliness, our human incapacity. Therefore, the law wasn't able, isn't able, to set us free. That's just what Paul is saying here.

*3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,*

The law could not set us free, but God could, and God did. God acted. And he acted by sending his son. And Paul used a very specific phrase, "sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh." And we all know, and we affirm all the time, that the word became flesh. God sent his son into the world and he took on flesh. He was embodied. He lived in our very world.

But in Paul's phrase, there is a distinction that is important for us to hold on to. Paul never used words lightly. He always had a very specific purpose. That's why so often in Romans, we have to stop, and we have to say, okay, now what exactly did Paul mean by this word? Because he didn't use words without meaning, without purpose. Paul said that Jesus or the son was in the likeness of sinful flesh. So that's an important qualification. So God the Son took on flesh, became truly human. Embodied. He lived and ate and walked and laughed and rested in a body just like ours. He lived within the realm, under the effects, of sin and death.

But here is the critical distinction. He never sinned. He never succumbed to the power of sin. While he lived and moved in our world, he never surrendered to sin. Therefore, he lived a perfect life, which meant and means that when he went to the cross, he went as a perfect sacrifice. An unblemished offering for sin. So in sending his son, God sent the perfect offering. And in sending the perfect offering, God on the cross condemned the condemner. God condemns sin. God declared sin guilty. Exposed sin for what it was. It is the problem in the world. So what God did in Christ, he did it for a reason. Here's why. Verse 4:

*4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us [in us who cannot fulfill it on our own], who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

So in Christ, God did for us what we could never do, so that we might become like him, that we might be righteous, that we might be made holy, that we would stand justified. God did that. That's why we sing amazing grace. That's why we can say with confidence, we are no longer guilty because God acted. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for us. We contributed nothing.

Now because of that, we can also be assured of this: there is nothing that we can do to undo what God has done for us. We don't need to live full of worry that maybe our shortcoming as we try to live out this life of faith is somehow gonna undo what God did finally and ultimately on the cross. It is done. Justified. Final ultimate declaration over those of us who are in Christ. We don't need to be filled with worry or fear. That is the foundation of our Christian life. We bring nothing, we receive everything. We are freed from condemnation. And we are freed to now step into newness of life. That's what Paul alluded to when he said, "we who walk, who live, according to the flesh, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." That's a hint at what is to come.



# lincolnberean

Before we move to that description of life, according to the Spirit, I do just want to stop, as we have so often here as we've walked through Romans, in this detailed explanation of the gospel and just say that everything that is to follow in the rest of Romans 8—it is only available through Jesus Christ. They're only available to those who have surrendered and placed their faith in him. Our justification in Christ, our placing of our faith in him and him giving us a declaration of righteousness, that is the foundation upon which this life in the Spirit proceeds.

And so I just want to say that if you have never done that, you can do that right now—placing your faith in Jesus—by letting him know that you're no longer going to trust in your own ability, trying to prove your own value, your own righteousness. You are going to trust him and his finished work on the cross, that you might be declared righteous because of what he did. That's what sets us free to then walk according to the Spirit. That's what sets us free to now step into the newness of life. The freedom of life in the power of the Spirit—that life is open to all. Everyone can enter that room, but there's only one door: the door that is entered through faith in Jesus Christ and through faith in him alone. Faith in Jesus Christ frees us from condemnation, frees us from guilt, and sets us on a path of growing in Christ-likeness, of walking according to the Spirit. That's what Paul just said. So now as he continues in verse 5, he's going to set in contrast, these two ways of life—life according to the flesh and life according to the Spirit. Verse 5, he says:

*5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it's not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Life according to the flesh, Life according to the Spirit. Life according to the flesh is marked by what simply we can do in our own strength and according to our own power. Life in the flesh is life without God. It's the best that we can muster all on our own. I think it's helpful and instructive for us that Paul describes it by saying the life of the flesh sets its mind on things of the flesh. That is to say, it thinks about it, dwells on it, focuses on that which I can do, what we can do in our own strength, according to our own wisdom, through our own power. That's the mind of the flesh. That's life according to the flesh.

That life is necessarily hostile towards God because at the heart of that approach to life is this thought: I know better than God. I can get what I want in my own way, therefore, I don't need God. Life according to the flesh is necessarily hostile towards God. It says ultimately that I should be on the throne of my life. I know what's best. And it is a life, Paul said, that leads to misery and to death. It's not pretty.

A life according to the Spirit could not be set in starker contrast. Rather than having a mind set on the flesh, life according to the Spirit is set on the things of the Spirit, set on things of God. What does God want? What does God say? What does his kingdom look like? How might I trust his power? How might I trust that that he will advance the ends that he wants in my life, the life of utter dependence, acknowledging that God knows better? The life according to the Spirit leads to life and peace. Life because it is connected to the source of all life, and peace because it's the only way to walk through life aligned with the God of the universe—the only way to walk through life with adequate power to overcome the struggles in life.

All of us encounter struggles. Only God is able to provide the power that allows us to navigate those well in a way that is according to his will in a way that he designed. The life full of peace. Because it's a life in step with the very creator of the universe. It's life according to the Spirit, not



# lincolnberean

just in some areas of life, but in all areas of life. It's a life of surrender, a life of surrender. Verse 9, he says:

*9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit [this is an acknowledgment, Paul's acknowledging these are believers], if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.*

The first part of this verse is a call to remember who we are. Paul's acknowledging they are believers. They have set their faith upon Christ, therefore, they're not in the flesh. They are out of that realm. They are now in the realm of the Spirit. Now, what he says next might seem to suggest a doubt about that, but the grammar and the way that that sentence works is not intended to introduce doubt or question, but rather to affirm what he just said. When he says, 'if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you,' he's essentially saying, "and I know it does." I know it does, because I know that you are no longer in the flesh, you are in the Spirit. The Spirit confirms this. The Spirit himself confirms it.

And this is what we can learn from this: if you are in Christ, here is a guarantee. If you're in Christ, you have been given his very Spirit. You have been given his Spirit in fullness, not in part. You'll never have more of it, you'll never have less of it. You have been given the Spirit of the indwelling God. It is not an optional add-on, it is standard equipment. When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you went from death to life. We call that regeneration. God made us alive to him. And in that very moment, he gave you, he filled you with, his very Spirit. The Spirit of the living God. Paul refers to it here also as the Spirit of Christ. We could see all the members of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, the Spirit, all working together to bring about restoration, to bring about redemption of all things, including you and me. If you are in Christ, you have the indwelling Spirit, and that means that you have been set free and you are able to now walk according to that Spirit. Now he continues in verse 10:

*10 If Christ is in you [again, this is language meant to affirm, if Christ is in you, and I know Christ is in you], though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead, will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

So what is he saying here? This is an affirmation of what we talked about last week. We have been made spiritually alive, justified, declared righteous and regenerated. Made alive to God. We have moved from death to life, but we still walk around in these mortal bodies. We still have the marks of fleshliness, these bodies that will ultimately one day die unless Jesus comes first. Everyone in this room will one day die, but here's the truth: death will not be the end of the story. Death will not have the final word because these bodies, each body in this room, if it is in Christ, will one day be resurrected and will be transformed.

It's biblically accurate for us to say, then, that in a sense we are saved as a past-tense reality. We were regenerated, we were justified, we were saved. It's also absolutely biblically true to say that we are being saved, God is making us more like Christ. He is conforming us to his image. We're becoming more like Jesus. The theological word for that is sanctification. We've been justified. We are being sanctified. And there is a future tense to salvation. We will be glorified, these bodies, feeble and frail as they are, one day will be glorified, will be made brand new, will be incorruptible. Just like the very body of Jesus Christ. That's a future hope. Throughout Romans, Paul is helping us understand the depth of our salvation, and not only the depth, but every angle, the breadth of our salvation. Salvation in all its fullness. We are saved in the past. We are being saved. We will be saved. We await our future glorification when these bodies will be put off and will be made brand



# lincolnberean

new. That's our future hope. Now, all of this, this deep truth leads Paul to the implications this should change the way that we live, and that's what he gets to in verses 12 and 13. He says:

*12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

We are no longer under obligation to the flesh. Absolutely true. We have been set free, but here's an important point: we can still live as though we are. Now, it makes no sense. We've been set free. We've been given the opportunity to step into fullness of the Spirit. But Paul makes it clear, while we are no longer under obligation, it's still possible for us to live as though we are still bound to that old way of life. We've been brought into life with Christ—we have a new husband, we've been brought into a new relationship, therefore we no longer need to flirt or hang out with the old husband—but it's still a possibility. We might still be drawn to it, still inclined towards it.

This is what we talked about last week. So the very tension Paul described in chapter 7 and I mentioned last week, that some people take chapter 7 in Paul's declaration of not doing that what he wants to do and saying, "Oh, see, that's just the way it's always going to be. We don't have a choice and so, just got to deal with it." We said last week, this isn't an excuse, this is an acknowledgment of the reality of the struggle of living out our faith while we live in these mortal bodies. A point of encouragement. But it's not an excuse to just give up the struggle.

No, we've been called to something more. God has set us free. We are no longer under obligation to the flesh. We are now under obligation to someone else, to Jesus Christ. We now are tied to him. We've been united with him. He is the new relationship, he is the new husband, and now we get to step into the fullness of that relationship—putting off the old relationship, letting it wither away and die. But not in our own power; in the power that the Spirit provides, trusting God's Spirit to help us as we seek to cultivate this relationship with Jesus Christ, as we seek to walk according to that which is true. This is the new opportunity.

We said last week, we asked this question: where is the power, where can the power be, found to live out this struggle? And we answered it: it's in the gospel. And what Paul makes clear here in chapter 8 is that the agent of empowerment is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that dwells in you and dwells in me. The law and the flesh can't help us live the life we've been called to, but the Spirit can. The Spirit does. The Spirit is willing. Do you know that the Spirit of the living God dwells in you and longs to empower you to step into the fullness of life? Fullness of life in Christ. Life united with God, life standing before the holy and righteous God, perfectly righteous yourself because of the merits of Jesus Christ. That is what the Spirit longs to bring about. That's the privilege that we have. That's the privilege that we have in Christ Jesus. That's the privilege that we have, as Paul is going to go on to explain, that's the privilege that we have as children of God. This is something else the Spirit has brought about. Verse 14, he says:

*14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba, Father" 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*

We now have the privilege of being those who are led by the Spirit of God, listening to the Spirit's voice, following the Spirit's prompting, and with that privilege comes a new identity. We've already talked about how we are no longer condemned. Guilty is not our identity, but righteous in Christ is our identity. But here, Paul uses different imagery. In Christ, we have been brought into a brand new family. We've been brought in to the household of God. Been brought into God's family. We are



# lincolnberean

now children of the living God, and that gives us, it brings us, new privileges. Brings us the privilege of being able to call the holy and righteous God our Father.

Now, our father, unlike so many earthly fathers and so many earthly relationships, our father is not severe, but he is full of love and care. We've been brought in to a relationship that is not tied to, that is not marked by, severity, but by intimacy. That intimacy is captured by this way of referring to God, that Jesus himself used. Abba. The way a child would look at his father. Daddy. Dear father. It's a word, an address, of intimacy. This is the privilege that we have in this new relationship with God, brought about by the work of Christ, empowered in us by the Holy Spirit. Oh, he is in charge.—he's not severe. He is our master—but he leads, and he guides, and he lives according to love. The Spirit brings this about, the Spirit that indwells each one of us. And the Spirit is the one who confirms this truth.

So if you are struggling to believe this, what I want to say to you is, don't try harder to believe it. Ask. Ask that God would confirm it for you. Ask that his spirit would strengthen your own heart, your own belief, that this is absolutely true of you in Christ Jesus, that we would take hold of this truth, we'd live according to it. Now, finally, in verse 17, he continues, he says:

*17 and if children [here's one more thing, one more thing that we can barely even fathom, and if children], heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

Our adoption, our being brought into the family of God, brings with it privileges. We are now heirs. We have an inheritance. And we aren't only heirs, we are co-heirs with Christ, which means that we have an inheritance awaiting us in this future day that is more stunning than we can possibly imagine. Next week, we're going to talk more about that inheritance.

Before we close, we do need to address the last part of verse 17. This phrase where Paul says, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. So I ask, is our suffering what guarantees our future glorification? Answer: no. Our reading of Romans should make it abundantly clear, there's nothing that we do that guarantees anything for us. But we can be sure of this, in this world, there will be suffering. And because God is who he is, we can also be absolutely assured, we can be confident that none of it will be wasted with him. He will use it for his purposes.

Now, in the first century, of course, these believers, they suffered persecution that was incredibly severe, even persecution unto death. And we need to acknowledge and pray for our brothers and sisters around the world where that is still their reality. Our brothers and sisters in South Asia that we are connected with that essentially are our church planters in that part of the world, they face persecution unto death at times in regions. We need to pray for them. Now, I pray that some people in this room might be called by God to get on a plane and go be a missionary in a place that is hostile, because they need the gospel. And if that would be you, then of course, you would face that type of persecution.

But most of us in this room are not going to face that type of persecution and suffering. Ours is going to look different. It's going to be the struggle and the suffering that often comes with living for Christ in a world that is against him. In walking according to the Spirit, seeking to listen to the word of the Spirit, to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, when everything in our world says to set our minds on that which we can do for ourselves, it's to remember and embrace the fact that we are in the family of God when we live in a world that says, "go it yourself, look out for number one." As we walk through this Christian life, there will be struggle, there will be resistance, but none of it is wasted with God. God will use all of it to grow us and that growth, that sanctification, ultimately finds its culmination in this future glorification that we await. We can count on that, can be absolutely assured, no suffering is wasted.



# lincolnberean

So as we close, what do we do? I wanted to ask a few questions as we finished. Where are you at here this weekend this morning? Do you find yourself feeling condemned this morning? If that is you, then today, the call is to remember and embrace what is absolutely true of us in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus. We can be absolutely assured of that blessed truth. We need to remember it, memorize it, dwell on it, wake up with it, go to bed with it. Remember it and embrace it.

Do you find yourself hopeless this morning? If that is you, then I'm praying that you would bask in the glorious truth that if you are in Christ, you have been adopted into the household of God, that you are a co-heir with Christ and you await a glorious inheritance. You're a co-heir. And even now, our relationship with Christ gives us a foretaste of what is to come.

Are you struggling—you're struggling to live out this Christian life? If that is you, then my encouragement, in fact, my exhortation, my charge to you, is that this week, this afternoon, that you would seek by faith to live, to walk according to the Spirit, the Spirit that God has given you, and that you would do that by setting your mind on the things of the Spirit. And the best way to do that is by dwelling upon God's word. Upon what is true. About what he thinks, what he believes. His wisdom. Dwelling upon God's word and letting his word dwell richly in you, that you might walk according to it.

Who will set me free, Paul cried? Apart from Christ, there's no answer. Silence. Before Christ, we had no answer. We were stuck. We could only think according to the flesh. But now, in Christ, because of the gospel, we have been set free. We are free from condemnation. We stand righteous and we are free. Free to now live life in the power of the Spirit. Thank God for that.

Our Father, we thank you that in Christ you did for us what we could never do for ourselves. And Lord, we ask that you will help us to be firmly grounded and assured that we have been set free from condemnation and bondage, and that we have been set free to now walk according to the Spirit. Lord, help us to be people that set our mind on the things of the Spirit. Overwhelm us with your truth and help it to become not just that will we affirm, but that which we believe and live according to, that we might walk in newness and freedom and peace and life. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

*Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE  
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988, 1995  
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.*

*Copyright 2026 Lincoln Berean Church. All rights reserved.*

