

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus 《Ro 8:1-8,37-39》

Introduction: < Ro 8> represents the peak of gospel described by the entire book of Romans, and it is also the pinnacle that God desires all His children to attain in life. However, we cannot use our logic to understand the Word literally, or use our emotions to feel the love of Lord as we strive for our spirit to reach this pinnacle and enjoy the abundant, active life given by the Spirit. The “heavenly love” described here (not condemned < 8:1>; neither...nor... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord <8:39>) has been given to all believers in Christ. However, man needs to completely know and experience the bondage of sin, to the extent of solely relying on grace, before they can enjoy the shining of the love of the Holy Spirit. But the greatest spiritual problem of man is “not dead”, even after believing in the Lord (die and bury with the Lord), the heart of “not dead” remains. This is the tendency of our flesh that causes us to live by relying on our intelligence, merits and will subconsciously. Hence, the law completely crushed the merit and will of man, in contrary, the Holy Spirit reveal the power of God that though born with sinful nature, they can actually fulfill the righteousness of the law. Try asking: How should we know this glorious Holy Spirit (the 3rd personality of the Holy Trinity)? Do we know it through knowledge and feelings? According to <Ro 8>, Holy Spirit is the spirit dwelling in God’s children. <Ro 8:16> said, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” The original disposition of this relationship is all foundation required to know the Holy Spirit. We absolutely cannot know the work done by Holy Spirit apart from this heart of child. Hence, one who truly knows the Holy Spirit and the liberation, indwelling, sanctification, guidance, filling, testimonies brought by the Holy Spirit, have to develop all these from the assurance of child of God. Apart from this assurance, all miracles, smooth-sailing things, health and wealth that we experience are meaningless, they are just transient blessings; they are just the temporary benefits received by one who is fatherless. Certainly, some believers may harbour such thoughts, “without the physical blessings and earthly wellness, how can we then see the love of Father God?” However, what is mentioned in <Ro 8> is this, “Precisely it’s because of this heart of child, that’s why you can see the greater love of God in various sufferings”. This counter-intuitive human nature is what children of God who are born again ought to understand and pursue. Can we run away from sufferings and enjoy smooth-sailing process in all things on earth? Actually, this is impossible in a world with ruler of the power of the air and sin. Therefore, God has given us the greatest gift, ie the Holy Spirit (received through the life of Christ), He is moving in our hearts, we who are with flesh, so that we can: ① Be assured that we’re no longer condemned 《8:1》; ② Can fulfill the righteousness of the law 《8:4》; ③ Give life to the mortal bodies (the future resurrection and able to see God’s presence) 《8:11》; ④ All the more see God’s glory in sufferings (the glory of the Cross); ⑤ Anticipate and wait upon the day of redemption when the whole creation has been groaning 《8:22》; ⑥ The help and intercession of the Holy Spirit in weakness 《8:26》; ⑦ God will work for the good of all who love God and submit to God in all things 《8:28》; ⑧ In all these things (even the greatest suffering on earth) we are more than conquerors 《8:37》. Do all these promises seem distant to our current situations and emotions? Why so? Has God given us empty talks? Actually, the key is, we have not been confirming and seeking the meticulous love of God under the unshakeable foundation of the identity of children of God, therefore, we feel that God’s love is very abstract. In fact, if the tendency given to us through the gospel that we believe in comes from the disposition of child of God, and in all things, this disposition is gradually strengthened through prayers in the spirit, we will be so utterly blessed!

1. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and will not be separated from the love of God! 《8:1, 37-39》

1) The love God has revealed to us in Christ

* The beginning and the ending of <Ro 8> have sufficiently expressed the great love that God has for His redeemed people. At the start, it says “not condemned” – proclamation of being justified, and the arrival of complete liberation; the ending talks about “not separated” – assurance of the eternal unchanging love of God. Actually, God is love, and <Ro 8> reveals the great abundant love of God: ① **To whom does God reveal His abundant love?** To those whom He has personally redeemed in Christ; ② **What then is the nature of this love?** This love is spiritual in nature, and it fills up the soul of man. Therefore, this love has to be understood through the Holy Spirit, not flesh, so that the experience of this love gradually fills up the spirit, enjoy His love by being able to meet God in the spirit and submit to Him in all things; ③ **How great is this love?** In various sufferings of life, even to the ends, this love is revealed even more greatly so that we can be more than conquerors. Hence, God’s love is both logical and illogical. Especially during illogical moments, the greater love of God is revealed.

2) Mediate: can the love we have been pursuing and longing to experience be tested?

*Often, we unknowingly long for the transient and limited love, hoping to feel God’s love physically; or we see God’s love when we are stronger in faith. But often, that kind of love disappears quickly and is unable to sink into the heart, not to stay strengthening us in the midst of our sufferings and failures. Instead, it causes us to be self-accused and feeling hopeless. In particular, man feels the pain when they experience suffering and failure, and this pain can easily produce in us the “sense of abandonment” (eg: So why does God allow this to happen on us? Why doesn’t God help me? Why does God allow us to continue to suffer?). Such feeling will quickly engulf our faith, give us unwillingness to depend on God and enter into greater pain and hopelessness eventually. Although, theoretically, we know of God’s presence, it is only at that moment that the personal presence of God that is revealed to us through the Holy Spirit can comfort and strengthen us, and give us more pressing heart to pray and look upon Him. At that point, we should never believe in the voice of our hearts, for the sinful body is attempting to deceive us through our hearts <Jer 17:9> - the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? So we cannot depend on it. Therefore, at that very point, we can only believe in the promise of God, and listen to the voice of the Spirit through the truth said by God. The Lord said, “No longer condemned”, “Not separated”. In the situations we are in, if we confirm and seek the meticulous love of God through the promises He has given us, we can experience the supporting power from the Holy Spirit and transcend the bondage of the suffering.

3) Blessed is the one who can listen to the correct voice in the foundation of God’s love!

* We may have heard of <Ro 8> up to ten times, but till today, our heart’s disposition have yet to be sculptured by the promises in it, resulting in us hearing voices that are not moving in love but flesh – the accusations, complaints, frustrations, worries, blames etc from flesh. Actually, if the spirit of man can hear the **greatly loved voice** from God’s Word, be reminded of **blessed thoughts**, receive **blessed mood**, how blessed he is! Today, the spirit of many believers is pathetic and confused, their heads are full of the bible knowledge, but they cannot experience the heavenly love. As a result, their spirit is always tormented by the carnal worries and troubles, their lives are full of worries and complaints, and they are easily accused by their own weaknesses. If one has truly heard the message from <Ro 8>, he will surely be awakened and know anew the promise in Christ. He will have the pressing heart to go into his spirit and pray until his heart’s disposition is shaped by God’s promise, so that he can hear the correct voice, be reminded of the correct thought and receive the correct mood, so much so that he can enjoy the complete liberation and victory in Christ. In <Ro 8>, Paul said, “ **I am convinced...**”. This is to tell us that this heavenly love cannot be easily felt by our naked eyes or ears, instead, God’s love has to be **deeply confirmed** through the forces of the ruler of the air, bondage of the opposing current, the apprehension towards the future, or even in our powerlessness and weaknesses.

2. Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death 《8:2-4》

1) According to the spiritual principle (law), God gives the Spirit of life to set us free from the law of sin and death 《8:2》

* When the bible mentions “law” here, a lot of bible interpreters may explain it as “regulations”, but it should not be so, instead, it should be “spiritual principle” embedded in the salvation grace executed by God.

*The bible tells us that God created the life of man according to the spiritual principles, thus, for man to be set free from sin, it has also to be in accordance to the spiritual principle. Here, although man has sinned and fell, God has prepared the salvation grace, that is the one who is without sin to take the place of the sinners, thus giving life to the one who is dead eternally in the soul because of the sin committed. This is like the principle described in <7:1-4> (Because of Christ, we are released from the accusations of the law, and thus also released from the bondage of sin and death). Here, we ought to know the new destiny, and the principle of functioning in life brought by the Spirit of life. Our hearts and minds need to be led by this new law in order to be at peace. In this new law: ① Our ending is alive. Our future is more joyful and glorious; ② Holy Spirit will **continue to sanctify** us because of love, so that we can become the freeman who fulfills the law. Therefore, our humility brings us more grace; ③ Besides, the **purpose and methods of God's leading are different from the worldly people**. Worldly people rely on their intelligence and will to succeed, but we will fail if we use the same method (Eg Saul). Only when we rely on the Holy Spirit can we enjoy blessed footsteps (eg Abraham); ④ **Sin is our enemy**, hence we need to depend on the Holy Spirit to put to death the misdeeds of our body daily in order to enjoy freedom and joy in the Lord; ⑤ Holy Spirit **helps us in our weaknesses**. When we examine our hearts, listen and obey to His intercessions, we will surely see His help.

2) For the law was powerless, through Christ, God fulfills the righteousness of the law on us as live according to the Holy Spirit 《8:3-4》

* The powerlessness of the law mentioned here is not referring to the inadequacy of the nature of the law, rather, it is our sinful nature (flesh, fallenness, selfish disposition) that robs away the effect of the law, causing man to be unrighteous and preventing man to be sanctified. Therefore, only through the Word became flesh and the redemption on the Cross can God fulfill the requirements of the law, so that we can be sanctified through His Spirit. In here, God has done 5 things proactively:

① God sent His own son – reveal the sacrificial love of Father God; ② Christ came in the likeness of sinful man (Word became flesh), genuine human nature that is without sin. God wants to triumph over sin and Satan in thus human nature, and now as He is ascended to the heaven, He is still interceding for God's people before the Father; ③ Became the sin offering – Christ has come to deal with sin, He had completely bore the wrath of the righteous Father God on sin; ④ Condemned sin – causing punishment to come unto the sin, so that it will never come onto His people; ⑤ Enable the righteous requirement of the law be fulfilled in people who live according to the Holy Spirit (this is also referring to justification, also sanctification).

* There is a very fundamental theological emphasis here, ie “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us” – the righteousness of this law is to enable man to become God's children, and to submit to the spirit of loving God and men in the law through this heart of child (do out of love for God, not do out of the need to keep to the law). Although the accomplishment of Christ is the emphasis here, the obedience of men also bears witness. Its not like what the non-legalists often say, since Christ has died for me, it has “satisfied” the righteousness of law, so we can live and ignore the moral teachings in the law. Also because of the finished work of Christ we're imputed with righteousness. Actually, such is not the attitude of those who live by the Holy Spirit (people who're justified). As children, even though we're weak, we're still willing to submit to God (follow the Holy Spirit). Hence, we need to be vigilant and not jump into the thoughts that deceive ourselves: “Lord had died for me, it's good enough for me to believe”. “Believe” has to have evidence. Paul had deliberately elaborated “in order that the righteousness of the law (God's responsibility to fulfill the salvation) might be fully met in us who do not live according to the flesh but according to the spirit (the evidence of one who truly believes). In fact, the law of moral teachings is not abolished with the arrival of Christ's grace. Instead, the moral teachings are to be done through the Holy Spirit within us. Hence we should confirm - do our inner hearts care about the moral teachings, are we inclined towards inner godliness (love Lord, draw near to Lord, and submit to Him)?

3. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace 《8:5-8》

1) The absolute principle of the flesh is always opposing the Holy Spirit 《8:5》

* The bible talks about the 2 types of inclinations (having mind set on the flesh or the Holy Spirit) brought by 2 types of disposition (people who live by the flesh and people who live by the Spirit). You are what you do. “Live according to” here refers to yielding to the sovereignty and leading of the object. “Minds set on” means having the mind, interest and emotions set on the object.

* Those who live according to flesh are people of the world who have yet to born again, or the persisting old person in us who have born again. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires (the sinful nature here does not refer to the instinct or needs of our bodies but the self-centered human nature in the fallen people, the self that is especially controlled by sin). Thus, people who live according to the sinful nature will never submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, he is also unable to submit to the law of God. They may carry out good deeds, bring out the universal love and virtue of human, or display strong will, but there's no essence of loving and glorifying God in all these. But in us who are born again, there is another disposition inside us, ie the new person who lives in accordance with the Spirit (the disposition of son of God). He has another inclination (minds set on what the Spirit desires – exalt Christ, do the will of God and give all glory to God). These two are eternally opposing each other, and this friction is not resolvable. This is like the war between desires and Holy Spirit mentioned in <Gal 5:16-26>.

2) The definite outcomes of setting minds on the flesh and Holy Spirit 《8:6》

① Mind of sinful man is “death”. “Death” represents two meaning: First, eternal separation from God and bear the unending punishment of sin, this is the eternal consequence of all who do not believe in Christ; Second, cannot see the presence of God. This is not only the state of the life of non-believer, it is also the state that believers may fall into occasionally. Hence, Holy Spirit will grieve if believers are setting minds on the flesh, He will shine upon us (discipline).

② Mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. Here, people who are led by the Spirit will bring “life and peace”. There are 3 ways of explaining it: Firstly, they are aware of spiritual reality, can discern the flaming arrows from the demon army and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, therefore, they live by desiring and seeking the voice of God; Secondly, they are reconciled with God, and made peace with men, thus they are peaceful in their inner hearts; Thirdly, for they are people who love life and peace, they will be even more earnest in pursuing the peace that holiness brings; they will also continue to seek the good that comes from the new way of the spirit.

3) The sinful mind is hostile to God, it does not submit to God's law 《7-8》

* The inclination of a sinful mind is hostile to God, and thus defy and reject God's gospel in the spirit. Such inclination bears hostility towards the holy name, kingdom, will, Son, Holy Spirit, the saints of God, and cannot surrender to God alone. On the outside, he may display respect towards Jesus and Christianity, but he will never surrender the sovereignty of life to God, neither does he need His redemption. Here the bible mentioned that he does not submit to God's law, nor can he do so. The “cannot” here reveals the two personalities in the spiritual world that are absolutely opposing one another – the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit. Therefore, there're two different role models of actions in a man's life – one is living by the Spirit, one is living by the sinful nature. If we're already belonged to the Holy Spirit, we will surely enter such spiritual battle and the Spirit within us will wage wars with our flesh. Next week, we will talk more about how to rely on the Holy Spirit to put to death the misdeeds of our bodies. But before that, we need to first understand the spiritual reality we're living in, and come to realization that we're already in the spiritual battles. Many believers are very ignorant of it, and do not have the idea of relying on the Holy Spirit. Actually, before we can put to death the misdeeds of our body, we need to know what flesh is first, and how it is affecting us daily, how it is controlling us and putting off the Holy Spirit conviction in us. Only believers with such spiritual foresight can enter into a faith that genuinely live by the Holy Spirit.