

Romans 8:3-4

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

So, at this point we know that we are *justified*, that is, *legally declared righteous*, by faith in the work that Christ performed on our behalf, and that this salvation from the penalty of sin is offered to us as a *free gift*, accessible to us only through our faith placed specifically and implicitly in that work that He performed.

We also know that we are positionally dead to sin, and also therefore positionally dead to the Law as a *matter of necessity*—for how can one be legally, positionally dead to sin if they are still under the legal dictates of the Law, which demands absolute perfection, something we cannot fulfill in our flesh?

It is evident we have not attained God's standard of righteousness, and we have not received a covenant system from God to remit sins while still under the legal dictates of the Law, as was the case with Israel. Instead, we have received something even better, and this is made possible, even in our fallen bodies, and even in light of our imperfections, by the legal process God has set in place that is accomplished through the literal, physical, body of Christ, offered in our place. This entire work depends on the principle of substitution. Christ is our substitute, both for sins, and for righteousness in the judicial, legal sense. And we've discussed how this had to be so in order for God to uphold His justice. God could not simply overlook sin.

There is an application of the gospel and the things accomplished therein for every aspect of God's work in the process of our salvation. As we have learned, salvation is a general term, and in a soteriological sense, that is, in regards to our salvation *from sin*, occurs in three stages: salvation from the penalty of sin in our justification, salvation from the power of sin in our sanctification, and salvation from the presence of sin in our glorification.

In the process of our being legally declared righteous, His physical blood and death paid for our sins, that is, made *propitiation* for our actual deeds that were contrary to God. His burial made provision for our flesh to *rest in hope*, knowing that we too will some day be resurrected. And His resurrection provided for an authentication of our justification, that is, His resurrection demonstrated that He was in fact *without sin*, and therefore, death had no legal rights over Him. The resurrection therefore *proves* the work He performed is sufficient for our being declared righteous, that His righteousness was and is in fact *perfect*, and since that righteousness has been imputed to us, we also have the perfect righteousness that God demands, legally credited to our account.

We have also looked extensively at the issue of our sanctification—that God not only did a work to secure the forgiveness of sins and also impute His righteousness to our account, but that He provided something in relation to our very identity itself. That when we trusted the gospel and were spiritually baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, our old, “in-Adam” identity was put to death, and we received a new identity in Christ that is literally *dead to sin*, and that we are now free to walk in newness of life because of *His* resurrection life *in us*.

The work Christ performed on the cross made a provision for the *power of sin itself* as well as for righteousness, and not just in a positional, legal sense, but in a very real and practical way; that is, He provided a way for His identity and life and power to be manifest in our lives, to live free from the power of sin, and to demonstrate the very righteousness of God.

This operation is according to *the law of the Spirit of life* that is *in Christ Himself*. Not *was* in Christ, but *is* in Christ, for He possesses eternal life within Himself both now and eternally. This is the law that is at work in us that is able to raise us to new life *here and now*, because of the *inability* of death to hold Jesus Christ, because of His sinless perfection. Since He was without sin, death had no legal rights over Him. Thus, it is the law of the Spirit of *life*, and that life is what we are given access to—it is *His* life.

The Spirit’s operation now *in us* is “like as” Christ was raised up from the dead (Rom. 6:4), and so it is *analogous* to Christ’s resurrection, but not identical, as that grammatical construct containing *like* or *as* is what we call a *simile*. And so this resurrection life is not speaking about our future resurrection, but the power of His literal resurrection being manifest in our mortal lives here and now, thus it is similar, but not identical. It is His life which gives us power over *functional death* in our daily walk. Thus, if we walk according to His life in us, we are free from the functional condemnation that we invariably experience when we try to serve God in our own strength, in our flesh.

The Law of the Spirit of life refers to the legal process by which Jesus Christ was able to be resurrected from the dead, and since we have been baptized *into* Jesus Christ, since we have

been *identified* with Jesus Christ, since we share *the same Spirit of life that is in Christ*—that same law that was at work when He physically rose from the dead is at work in us also.

I mentioned before how it is often so easy for us to believe the miracles in the Bible—the loaves and the fishes, or the creation account—but it is sometimes harder for us to believe the work that God has accomplished in us through His Son. But if God could raise Jesus up from the dead, then why couldn't He change us? Why couldn't He free us from the power of sin and darkness? We underestimate the provision He's made for us, and the power that is available to us spiritually because of our union to Him.

And so, these are some of the key things we should be fairly established in by the time that we get to Romans 8:4.

Here in verse 4, we see the *end goal* of Christ coming and living a life without sin and going to the cross; that when He condemned sin in the flesh what He was doing was providing a way for the very righteousness that is contained in the Law itself to be fulfilled in us—that is, for God's righteousness itself to be practically worked out and demonstrated in our lives.

That is why verse 3 says that Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh *and for sin*, condemned *sin* (singular) in the flesh. Christ came *for sin*.

What He did on the cross before He died, *in His very soul*, was make an offering that condemned—or carried out a sentence against—the power of sin which resides in man's *identity*. This is why He says in Psalm 22, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? And I am a worm, and no man*. The identity of *Adamic man* was imputed to Him, and this is how He *became sin itself*, and in so doing absorbed the wrath of God against that identity.

This had to be accomplished *prior* to His physical death. Christ could not die while being identified with sin, or else His death would not have been a sinless offering for sins (plural); if He had died while being the *sin bearer*, He would have died with sin being imputed to His account and would have not been able to rise from the dead, but would have been kept in hell. Christ died a spiritual death *in Adam* on the cross *in our place*, prior to His physical death.

Thus, Christ is able to say *it is finished* before He gives up the ghost; and while this definitely relates to the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the crucifixion, those prophecies include the passage of Isaiah 53, which specifically speak of the travail of *His soul*, and how that *soul itself* was made an *offering*. Not just His body, but His *soul*.

The provision that Christ made here that is spoken of in Romans 8:3 was not for *His* flesh, as His flesh was only in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, because He was entirely without sin. And the

provision spoken of here is not for our justification, as it is speaking of a provision for *sin*, singular, that is, the power and presence and law of sin itself, not of the physical deeds we've committed. It was a provision for our identity as sinners. This is a provision that relates specifically to our identity, and to our functional, sanctified life. As we have learned, we were not sinners because we sinned, but we sinned because we were sinners. The problem itself was rooted in our identity.

And so the work of the cross also provides for this work of sanctification; when we believed, God gave us a new identity in Christ, and sanctified us, or set us apart. As I said earlier, the gospel provides for every aspect of our salvation, whether justification, or sanctification, or glorification.

The spiritual death He died on the cross *prior* to physical death makes a provision for our *identity*, for our freedom from the Adamic nature. The burial makes a provision for our *flesh—our present bodies*—to rest in hope in their present state, knowing that our old man has been crucified and that we have been set free from the sin that resides in our identity; and the resurrection makes a provision for us to walk in newness of life, and for our present bodies to *not see corruption*, that is, to be free from the power of sin in our spiritual walk, as *corruption* is equated with *sin*. And these concepts of our flesh *resting in hope*, and *not seeing corruption*, come from the prophecy of Christ's death in Psalm 16.

And so we see how the work of the cross, of the death, burial, and resurrection, provides for both our justification and sanctification.

And so, as I said, when we get to Romans 8 verse 4, what we are seeing is yet another aspect of *why* Christ did all that He did. Christ performed the work He did and made the provisions needed so that He could accomplish something *in us*. God desires to have the righteousness of the Law fulfilled in us, and yet without us being under the Law itself.

Romans 8:3-4

3 *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

4 *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

There are some common misconceptions as to what specifically "grace" is. Grace has many aspects to it, but if we were to boil it down into the simplest of terms, we can say grace is God providing for us what we could not provide for ourselves.

We couldn't produce our own justification, could we? We couldn't. And so God *provided* that justification and all of the components necessary to accomplish that *for us*—He provided the *propitiation* and *imputation* necessary for us to be declared righteous, and the result that those things secured for us, *atonement*.

But often, *justification* is as far as we get in understanding God's grace. Remember that sin *shall not* have dominion over us, for we are not under the Law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14), by which we deduced that grace is connected to a *dominion*, and that this means grace contains *power*.

And what have we been learning? That not only can we not produce our own righteousness *legally*, but we cannot produce our own righteousness in life *practically*. And so part of God's grace is providing the life and righteousness of Christ Himself *for us*—providing *for us* what we could not provide *for ourselves*. Eventually, we will see the advanced application of grace, that it even extends beyond the issue of sin, but that there is actually a supply of the Spirit to allow us to endure suffering itself, as we are systematically confirmed to the image of the son of God.

And so, when Jesus came, He came to *destroy the works of the devil*:

1 John 3:8

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Now of course we know that this verse is found in Israel's doctrine, but this is exactly why we need to be familiar with the *entire Bible*. There are truths which are contained outside of Paul's epistles that are necessary for us to properly understand our own doctrine. Do you think Jesus isn't concerned with destroying the works of the devil in the dispensation of grace? He is concerned with this, and Romans 8:4 tells us this, that God desires to have His righteousness fulfilled in us.

Jesus Christ did not just come so that He could simply *forgive* our sins, although that is a necessary part of it; He came to *destroy* sin—He came to destroy the power and effects of sin, and to free us from sin, and to destroy all the works of the devil, who sinned from the beginning. Those works of Satan began in the garden, but Satan is still at work in the world, and is very busy building up strongholds in the minds of men and in society:

Ephesians 2:1-3

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

We see that the course of this world is according to Satan, and that he is at work in the world, in the children of disobedience. Every one of us, before we believed, were *all* children of disobedience, and many of those influences and thought patterns tend to persist even after we get saved. But Jesus Christ came to destroy those things within us as well.

Later, in Romans 13, we are going to be instructed to *cast off the works of darkness*, and to *put on the armor of light*, as we prepare to engage in true spiritual warfare in the world. But this first requires that we have Christ's functional righteousness installed in us, and this is going to be done *without* the external command of the Mosaic Law. Instead, we are going to be educated in four key decision making skills that will allow us to function in God's righteousness *without the Law*.

Remember, to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves *is* to fulfill the law:

Matthew 22:36-40

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Nothing God does can conflict with His own nature or standards, and thus, what He is doing today with the Body of Christ, even though it is not under the Law, is still in perfect accordance with *who He is*. Later in our doctrine, Paul is going to elaborate on this further:

Romans 13:8-10

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

And so we know that we are not under the Law from the doctrine we've already received prior in the book of Romans, but we also know that Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and from Romans 8:3-4, that Jesus did something through the gospel that provided a way for the very righteousness of the Law to be fulfilled in us without us actually being under the Law itself.

We have not yet been educated in Romans concerning our heavenly inheritance, which will come later in this chapter, but we know from other passages already that our destiny is a heavenly one, not an earthly one.

If we have an eternal inheritance in the heavens, then what use is our practice of the Law of Moses here on earth, especially when our physical body has been judicially crucified with Christ? Carnal commands are not going to be how we function there, and that is not how God is training us here. We are not going to be concerned with what fabrics we are wearing, what animals we can eat, what days we observe—these are all *earthly* things. God is preparing us for a different vocation, where His righteousness can be demonstrated and put on display, but where the earthly Law *is not something that can even be practiced*.

For God Himself to deal with men on the basis of His righteousness *apart from the Law* was only made possible by the life and death of Christ, which provided for our positional, judicial death, whereby we are made free from the Law, and by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself to our account. This operation which was necessary to prepare to Body of Christ for the heavenly places *could not even begin or be possible until after the death, burial, and resurrection*, and thus the Body of Christ, being subject to specific rules and a specific operation, had a definitive beginning in time, and of course that beginning was with the inception of the dispensation of God's grace, when He intercepted Saul of Tarsus and gave him an entirely new and distinct apostleship.

Hopefully, as we consider these things, we are seeing that there are *reasons* why we are not under the Law—that it is not an arbitrary decision that God just randomly made.

Following are some of the key reasons *why* we are not under the Law:

1. All of humanity is condemned by the Law, and so we must be legally declared righteous by something else, and that something else is *faith alone* in Christ's faithful performance *according to the Law*; the Law itself is not necessary *or even capable* of justifying sinful man (Rom. 3:19-26).

2. We are not under the Law, because that would place us under the *dominion of sin*, since the Law recruits the flesh; but we have been placed under the dominion of grace (Rom. 6:14).
3. We are made positionally *dead to the Law* so that we can be *married to Christ*, that is, so that the two can become one flesh, that we can then bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).
4. For Christ Himself to dwell in us, and perform His ministry in us, we must be identified with Christ, and not with sin, and yet if we are under the legal requirements of the Law, then our failure to keep it would condemn us, and we would necessarily be identified with our sins, thus, Christ would *not* be able to *dwell* in us. But we have been made positionally dead in our mortal bodies, that Christ may in fact dwell in us (Rom. 8:10).
5. We have been taken out from under the Law so that we can engage in a real Father/son relationship with God (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:1-7), and experience all of the liberties that come with that familial relationship.
6. We are taken out from under the Law so that we can be educated in righteousness for our roles in the heavenly places (for the Law is earthly, but what we are being prepared for is a heavenly inheritance).

Point number 1 demonstrates that the Law is not necessary for our justification; points 2 through 4 are essentially conveying the same thing, but convey different aspects necessary for God to perform the spiritual operation in us that He is performing; point 5 shows us that as long as we were under the Law, God was not able to deal with us as adult sons, but only able to deal with us as children, which is no different than a servant; point 6 shows us that there is a real reason behind having us trained in righteousness apart from the Law, and that is our eternal inheritance in the heavens. I realize that we have not made it to point number 5 or 6 in our doctrine here in Romans, but I wanted to include these just to help us understand there are reasons why God's ministry today is not according to the Law.

And so it is clear we are not under the Law, and *cannot* be under the Law, if God is going to perform *His* ministry of righteousness *in us*; if He is going to deal with us as adult sons and daughters with liberty, and equip us for our future vocation in the heavenly places. But just because God has taken us out from under the Law does not mean he's simply left us to our own devices—He desires to have the very righteousness that the Law conveyed fulfilled in us, and has made a way for that to be accomplished.

God is not after us trying to fulfill the commandments contained in the Law in our fleshly bodies, He is after us demonstrating *His* righteousness, and His righteousness can be demonstrated without the carnal commandments of the Law of Moses. Remember, God is perfectly righteous, and yet God Himself is not under the Law. This *proves* that there is a righteousness of God that exists *apart from the Law*, and this is what God desires to have manifested in us. If the righteousness of Christ was what was absolutely necessary for our justification, then it is the righteousness of Christ that God is after in our sanctification. He is not after our works, but the work of Christ in us.

Romans 8:3-4

3 *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

4 *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Remember our previous verse of Romans 8:3 that said, *For what the Law could not do...*

And we asked ourselves: what could the Law *not* do?

It could not produce in man the righteousness it contained. We are of course speaking here of the Old Covenant Law system. It is evident in the New Covenant given to Israel in the ages to come that the Law itself will be written in their hearts, and they will by the power of God, fulfill the righteousness of the Law as well, but it will not be by their own self effort or power; again, it will be by *His power in them*.

We see in both programs—with or without the form of the Law itself, fulfillment of the righteousness contained therein is obtained only by a Spiritual operation that God performs in the inner man.

There was a righteousness of the Law (Deut. 6:25), but Paul says that now the righteousness of God *without* the Law is manifested (Rom. 3:21).

Deuteronomy 6:24-25

24 And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

25 And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.

Romans 3:21-22

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference...

And so, in time past, a righteous Israelite sought God by the covenant system that He set in place, and he kept the commandments by faith. That is not to say he kept them perfectly, but that he diligently sought to keep them because of his love for God. And if he fell, he offered the correct sacrifices and offerings to atone for that sin.

Today, the righteousness of God without the Law has been revealed. And so, to attempt to put yourself back under the Law is actually contrary to what God is doing. This seems counterintuitive, but it is yet another part of the manifold wisdom of God.