

Venture Life Groups
Eight
Session 1: Righteous in Christ
Romans 8:1-4

Main Point

Christ died as a sacrifice for our sin and gives us the gift of His righteousness.

Introduction

- What is one news story you heard this week that reminded you of the changing standards of morality in society?
- How would you describe the concept of right versus wrong to a child?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Read Romans 8:1-4.

- How would you define condemnation, and what does it have to do with a person's relationship with God?
- Why is there no condemnation for people in Christ Jesus? What does that mean?
- How does the truth of Romans 8:1-2—in Christ we have no condemnation—impact your life both today and for eternity?
- Verse 2 compares “the law of the Spirit of life” with the “law of sin and death.” What characterizes each of these ways of living?
- As a Christian, your life is defined by the law of the Spirit. In what ways are we tempted to live under the law of sin and death even after we become Christians?
- What “law” is Paul referring to in verse 3, and what are its requirements? How did Jesus' meeting the law's requirements affect our position before God and our relationship with sin?
- What makes Jesus' work on the cross so significant?
- Read verse 4 again. In everyday terms, what does it mean to be righteous before God?
- Jesus' death on the cross makes us righteous in God's eyes. What part do we play in securing that righteousness?
- From verses 1-4, how would you explain the gospel to someone who feels they are not “good enough” for God?

| Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

- How does it make you feel to know you are the “righteousness of God”? What did you have to do to get this title?

- How are we to live in response to Jesus' work on our behalf?

Application

- Is there a sin in your life that causes you to question if God sees you as righteous? How can you incorporate the truth of this lesson into your life to help combat those feelings this week?
- Is there anything you might be doing subconsciously as a way to earn righteousness? What do you need to do differently to approach that area of your life appropriately?
- Who in your life needs to be encouraged to accept God's righteousness rather than trying to earn it?

Pray

Ask that the reality of God's gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ will reach the depths of praise and gratitude in our hearts.

Commentary

| Romans 8:1-4

8:1-2. Paul's therefore ... now occurs this way only here in Paul's epistles. Coupled together, the two particles call attention to a turning point in Paul's epistle (see 5:1 and 12:1 for other major turning points signified by therefore). The main text of Paul's argument can be seen most clearly by skipping from 7:6 directly to 8:1: "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (7:6).

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).

In Christ Jesus and "in Christ" occur 119 times in Paul's epistles. The other epistles add only four additional occurrences (none in Acts and the Gospels). It is fitting that the apostle who received the revelation of the mystery of the union of Jew and Gentile into one body should coin a phrase to describe those incorporated into one body by that union. The body is, of course, the body of Christ, the church (see Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24). But it is not the membership of all Christendom's organized churches. Rather, the body of Christ is that mystical body made up of those who have died together with Christ through faith, and have been made "one with him in spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). Being in Christ Jesus means we are free from the law of sin and death which blocked our way to every other blessing which is ours in Christ. The law of the Spirit of life which Paul says has set us free from the law of sin and death is more of a principle, or controlling power, than a law (see Rom. 7:23). 8:3-4. When a prisoner is freed from condemnation and penal servitude, he or she is freed to something else. Regardless of where the prisoner ends up, at the moment of release he or she has been freed to life. Such is the transition from verses 1-2 to 3-4. If verses 1-2 are about position (freed from servitude to sin and death), then verses 3-4 are about practice—free to live according to the Spirit. It is here that Paul moves beyond his summary statement of chapters 6 and 7 (see Rom. 8:1-2) and continues his treatise on sanctification—the position of holiness (set-apartness) which is ours in Christ which forms the basis of our becoming holy in practice. These four verses are not unlike the position/practice parallel found in Ephesians 2:8-10: "by grace you have been saved, through faith ... to do good works."

All along, it was God's intent that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met [fulfilled] in his people. Unfortunately, a perfect set of requirements was given to an imperfect people. This was not a mistake on God's part; rather, it was part of a glorious plan to bestow grace and mercy on those who needed it most—those who had become enslaved by the nature they inherited from Adam and which had been revealed by the law. So the law had two purposes: to provide life and to reveal the death in man—man's sinful nature. Because the law had no power of its own, it could not overcome the power of sin in humankind. But in a sinless person, the law could be fulfilled since a sinless person has his or her own spiritual power by which to keep the law. What God did in Christ Jesus to overcome the

dilemma of a perfect law being given to imperfect people was to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. God condemned sin in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.

To return to the Old Testament roots of the necessity for the requirements of the law to be kept by those who would live, Christ condemned sin for that very purpose. In order that we might be credited with having kept the law, the one who kept the law perfectly sacrificed himself for us—those who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Paul's point is not that Christ's condemning of sin is valid only for those who walk in the Spirit, as if walking in the Spirit were a condition to be met in order to receive the benefit of Christ's work. He is using the phrase to refer to believers in Christ; those who died and were raised with Christ.

Did God expect that we would keep the requirements of the law having been filled with the Spirit? That apparently was the intent of the new covenant promises in Jeremiah 31:33 (see Heb. 8:11-12), and seems as well to be Paul's intent as expressed later in Romans: "The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: Love your neighbor as yourself. ... Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:9-10). Freeing believers from sin and death means that they are also free from being controlled by the power of sin in our members.

| 2 Corinthians 5:21

5:19-21. What Christ did, God did. Christ's death mainly affected the world, that is, human sinners (rather than evil supernatural beings, for whom no divine provision for reconciliation has been made). Christ's death upholds God's righteousness. Trespasses were placed on the One who did not know sin. In return, the righteousness of God is credited (imputed) to all who are in Him. The message of reconciliation is known to others only when ambassadors for Christ spread it. The Great Commission is the responsibility of reconciled human beings, not angels (Matt. 28:18-20).