

“No Condemnation To Them That Are In Christ Jesus”

This statement from Romans 8:1 is the topic of this article. The verse reads, *“There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”* Is this an absolute statement, allowing no exceptions? That is, does the passage teach (as Calvinists insist it does) that once a man is saved, he is always saved, he can never “fall from grace?”

Leaving for a moment the passage, consider some passages which clearly teach that one can so sin so as to be lost. *“Ye are severed from Christ, those of you who would be justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace”* (Gal. 5:4). *“Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12). *“Take heed, brethren, lest haply there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God”* (Heb. 3:12). These passages both teach the possibility of falling from grace and the reality of it if one accepted the law, just as Paul taught elsewhere in Romans 8:12f when he wrote, *“So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

So, is Romans 8:1 an absolute statement, allowing no exception to his words, *“There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus?”* The statement is not an absolute, there are exceptions to it, for if it were, we would have a contradiction in the Bible. Condemnation is possible to some who are in Christ Jesus. Those in Christ to whom no condemnation comes are those who *“walk after the Spirit of Christ,”* who possess the mind of Christ. In fact some ancient manuscripts add this phrase to the verse: *“no condemnation ... to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,”* showing the statement to be conditional. However, those manuscripts regarded by authorities as the most accurate do not have the preceding qualifying statement. Still, the thought is there and is found in verse four: *“that the ordinances of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”* Explanation of verse one is found in verses two and three: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. 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 sin, condemned sin in the flesh ...”*

In these two verses three different laws are mentioned: 1) *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;”* 2) *“the law of sin and death”* and 3) *“the law.”* There was condemnation under the law. *“As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, cursed is every one that continu-*

eth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:12). The law could not free one from *"the law of sin and death"* but the *"law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus"* could -- that is where there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ frees men from the curse and penalty of sin.

The *"law"* could not free men from that curse because it was weak in the flesh. The desires of the flesh sometimes were stronger than the desires of the Spirit and when man succumbed to those desires (and all did, Rom. 3:23), he came under the law's curse from which he could find no way of escape -- so long as he was under it. But what the law could not do, God both could and did do. He accomplished the release of man from the law of sin and death by sacrificing his own Son, providing pardon and freedom from death, the consequences of sin. Therefore, just as primary obedience to *"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ"* makes man free from *"the law of sin and death,"* following that same obedience -- walking after the Spirit -- guarantees man he is not under condemnation, he has been forgiven and remains forgiven so long time as he walks after the spirit. But, man must walk after the spirit, for if he walks after the flesh, he will die. Release from the law of sin and death is possible, but not for the man who *"continues in sin!"*

Jim McDonald