In the last passage, we learned of the spiritual battle that we must fight in order to serve God in the new way of the Spirit. This spiritual battle is to the death. But the mysterious truth is that only when we die with Christ to the sinful nature in this way can we live and serve God fruitfully. So, we were encouraged to keep fighting until we could say with Paul, “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Chapter 8 opens the door a little more onto this new life in the Spirit that is ours by faith in Jesus Christ. There are many wonderful truths given to us in the Bible. But the most wonderful truth of all is that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. May God bless us to take hold of Christ and of his death for our sins and resurrection from the dead, until we too can confess by faith, “There is now no condemnation for me.”

I. No condemnation

Verses 1 and 2 say, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” In chapter 7, St. Paul began to speak about serving in the new way of the Spirit. But first, he had to lay to rest the concerns of the Jewish Roman Christians regarding the law. The law was their first love. But they had to understand that the law was given to expose sin and condemn it as utterly sinful. Of course, the law also revealed the way of truth and life, but the sinful nature so weakened mankind that we were powerless to follow that way. Instead, our sinful nature dug in its heels as master of our bodies, and, through the law, condemned us to
death. We were prisoners inside our own bodies, helpless to do the
good we desired to do. We wanted to be gracious and loving to all of
God’s sheep and one another, but we were crabby more often than not.
We wanted to prepare treasures from God’s word for each of our Bible
students, but we wasted time here and there, and then went to Bible
study unprepared. We wanted to do our best both in the world before
men and in God’s work. But we failed, and could bear little to no fruit.
We wanted to buy something good for others, but we ended up
coveting it for ourselves. How could we not despair along with Paul:
Who will rescue us from this body of death?

Look again at verse 1. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for
those who are in Christ Jesus.” The law and the commandment teach
us the good that we should do. But we failed to do it. So we should be
condemned. But Christ Jesus came to this world not to condemn the
world, but to save the world through him. He came because God is not
pleased to judge the world only. God sent his own Son into the world in
the likeness of sinful man as a sin offering, so that sinful man might
not remain under condemnation, but be set free from sin and live for
God in the new way of the Spirit. No condemnation means that we are
not held accountable for our sins committed in our ignorance and
unbelief. No condemnation means that we are forgiven through the
blood that Jesus shed for our sins on the cross. No condemnation
means that we have been set free from the law of sin and death, and
are free to obey the law of the Spirit of life. No condemnation means –
no condemnation. We are no longer under law, and no longer
answerable to the law's demands. No condemnation is freely available
to everyone who is in Christ Jesus.

But “no condemnation” is not easy for anyone to believe, because of
sin living in us. This is the reason Paul concluded chapter 7 as he did.
He could have proclaimed thanksgiving to God and to Christ, and let it
go at that. But he summed up his spiritual condition in 7:25b, “So then,
I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a
slave to the law of sin.” No condemnation is not given to reformed
sinners. No condemnation is proclaimed to those who are sold as
slaves to sin. No condemnation is the grace of God given to sinners to
free us from sin and enable us to live by the Spirit in Christ Jesus from
now on. No condemnation will never be earned. No condemnation is what we believe when we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

No condemnation is the starting point of a life in the Spirit. One young man committed a terrible sin of adultery, and then tried to cover it up by marrying the woman in order to make it look like he was acting out of compassion. It didn’t work, and the young man’s life became miserable and a burden to others. Slowly, the reality of what he had done began to sink in, and he despaired of ever living even a normal life. He was condemned, and rightfully so, by everyone, including the woman. What could he do? In desperation, he prayed to God. Then God spoke this word of grace to his heart during prayer. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” He understood that “no condemnation” meant, “I will be your defender.” It was an amazing offer to a sinner facing the condemnation his sins deserved. Who could defend such a person? But Christ Jesus died on the cross as the ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world so that he might be our defender. He could have withheld his blood from those of us who really are too far gone in our sins. But he shed his blood for us all. He is willing to be the defender for anyone who comes to him in faith. From that point on, the young man knew who he was and where he stood before God. He was a sinner, sold as a slave to sin, but he was forgiven and redeemed in Christ Jesus. Therefore, not only was he free to serve God, but he was obligated to do so. It means that from then on, he could never give up in the spiritual battle to be united with Christ. At no time was he ever worthy of such a hope. But he held on to that hope by faith, and strengthened by the Spirit, he could see that hope being realized step by step.

No condemnation is the power source for sinners to make spiritual decisions to participate in the world salvation work of God. One medical doctor grew up in a home that was dedicated to serving world mission. But she rejected God's grace and mission for her life. She thought she would be ok, because her parents were ok. But in one year, her father died and her mother abandoned the mission she had served for 20 years. Now, she was left alone to face God, and her former pride and rebellion testified against her, condemning her to make her useless to God. But through the spiritual help of her
husband, she could turn to God as she was, and believing in God’s promise, claim “no condemnation.” God should have punished her for her sins. Instead, God revealed to her the way for her to participate in his world salvation work through using her training as a medical doctor to go wherever God’s work was going on. God redeemed her from her empty way of life, and showed her the way to participate in the fruit-bearing work of God through this one promise, “No condemnation.” In her and in countless others, “no condemnation” has brought forth this great result. Look at verses 3-4. “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”

II. Controlled by the Spirit

Look at verse 5. “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” This verse clearly teaches us that we have two choices. Either we remain under the control of the sinful nature, pursuing the desires of our sinful nature which lead to death, or we come under the control of the Spirit, and set our hearts and minds on what the Spirit desires for us. Look at verse 6. “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;” Young people are afraid to come under the control of the Spirit, because they don’t want to lose their sinful human freedom. But what fruit do we bear when let ourselves be controlled by the sinful nature? Verses 7 and 8 read, “the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” One student was upset when he was rebuked by his teacher for a poor performance on a test. He told his classmate in private, “I will show that teacher. I’m going out drinking and am going to skip out on class from now on.” We can understand that this student is foolish for being hostile toward his teacher, instead of listening and learning from him. But he is the exact picture of the mind of sinful man before God’s law. He cannot submit to God’s law. He cannot please God and his sinful
nature. He must make a choice; either I will please God and live, or I will please my sinful nature, and bring condemnation down on my own head. Actually, before Christ’s coming, he had no choice at all. But “no condemnation” means that even such an incorrigible sinner can repent and live from now on as God’s righteous child through the Spirit.

What is the fruit of the Spirit living in me? Look at verses 10 and 11. “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” When we confess faith in Christ Jesus, and the Spirit of Christ comes to dwell in our hearts, he must first put to death the sinful desires of our body. What does it mean? Look again at verse 10. “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.” When we are united with Christ by faith, we surrender our sinful passions and desires to him, and he puts our body to death, so that we are no longer under the control of our sinful nature. Instead, he himself dwells in us through his Holy Spirit, so that we come alive to him and to our holy mission in him. As we studied in Romans 7, unless we first die to sin, we cannot be set free from the law and the condemnation of the law. Truly, to die to our passions and pride is like being crucified. But this is not God’s punishment. Rather, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the promise of a great redemption. Our body, once the sole possession of our sinful nature, and sold as an instrument of wickedness, will be redeemed and we will be made anew in the likeness of our Savior Jesus. Look again at verse 11. “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” The Spirit puts to death the body of sin, so that first our spirit and then our mortal body might be raised to life in him.

III. Our obligation as sons

Look at verses 12-14. “Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put
to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Under the control of the sinful nature, we are obliged to sin, and therefore to received condemnation and death. But we are no longer obliged to sin, because we can put to death by the Spirit the misdeeds of the body and live. But that does not mean that we are no longer under any obligation. Instead, we have an obligation to the one who set us free from sin and death. But it is not like the obligation from before. We were slaves with no hope. But through Christ Jesus and the Spirit he gave us, we have become sons. Slaves serve out of fear. But sons serve in hope. Look at verse 15. “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry “Abba, Father.” To serve as a slave is very bitter, because there is no hope. We are terrified to serve – terrified to give our lives in service to God, because of our past experience as slaves to our sinful desires which bore fruit only for death. But we must know and believe that our service to God is always hopeful and joyful, for it is service to our heavenly Father, and we have a hope to share in our Father’s estate. Therefore, we must not be sorry that we are called to serve. Rather, we must follow the example of our older brother, Jesus, and share in his sufferings as a shepherd of God’s flock. For we will also share in his glory and riches and honor in the kingdom of heaven. Let’s read together verse 17. “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Thank God that through Christ Jesus we have been set free from the control of the sinful nature through the promise of “no condemnation” for those in Christ Jesus. Thank God that the Spirit of life puts to death the sinful nature so that we may live in spirit and we may be redeemed in our physical bodies. Thank God that we have an obligation and a hope as God’s children to share in Christ’s world salvation work on earth and to share in his everlasting glory in heaven.