

MORE
ABOUT

ROMANS

“The Sparkling Point of the Diamond—4”

Desmond Ford

The first three verses of Romans 8 summarize the preceding 7 chapters of the book. They summarize Romans 1–5, and freedom from wrath; Romans 6, and freedom from sin; and Romans 7, freedom from the motivation of law.

They tell us of the tremendous blessings of the gospel. There is no condemnation for the believer today, tomorrow, or the next day.

We stand in justification

I feel sad for people who think that justification happens only at the beginning of the Christian life to get us started— but after that it's all sanctification. The idea that God does a mighty work for you and forgives you at the start, but then— you'd better not make any more mistakes or you'll be done in. That is not the teaching of the Bible.

We **stand** in justification, according to Romans 5:1.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom we have gained access by faith into **this grace in which we now stand**. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1–2 NIV emphasis supplied)

Being justified by faith, we stand, we have access.

In other words, justification is over us all the time, until we die, until Jesus comes.

God greater than conscience

Not for one moment does God see me as I am. Thank heaven for that! God sees me only in Christ. God sees you only in Christ. Justification is a continuous, uninterrupted blessing all your days in all your ways, so that your standing before heaven is always one hundred percent.

Even if your conscience is giving you a hard time.

This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence

whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. (1 John 3:19–20 NIV)

Christianity is not a mechanical religion. We do not only receive forgiveness for every sin remembered and confessed. We are so weak we are often unaware of our mistakes. Rather, when we look to Jesus we are justified all the time. We are always right with God in Christ. This brings to our hearts the love that is the intent of the law.

Isn't that good? When our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts.

The KJV says, “if our heart condemn us.” Of course our hearts do.

Often. There's reason for our hearts to do it. They don't do it one-tenth as often as they should because our conscience is blunted.

But even our blunted consciences tweak us, or stab us, every now and again. But the Bible assures us that if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and he doesn't condemn us.

Jesus gentle

Please observe Romans 8, verse 4:

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. (Romans 8:4 NIV)

Once I become a Christian, I say, “Lord, I've messed up things for so long, I would like to do better now.”

I don't want to be the cause of heartache. Neither do you. I don't want to hurt those that I love, yet it's so easy to do. We lack the sensitivity of Jesus. He never said a wrong word.

I suspect that even when Jesus walked, he walked so gently that he never woke up anyone who was slumbering. When Jesus touched someone that was sick, they were glad to have him touch them, for if anyone else had touched them, they would have jumped.

Jesus was gentle. Little children ran to him, they loved to be with him. Jesus was tender.

But you and I are rather brutal sometimes with the things that we say. My conscience often prods me that I have not thought twice before speaking once. The obvious reason that God gave us two ears and one tongue is that we might listen twice as much as we talk. God gave us two

eyes and one tongue that we might look carefully before we speak. We are to stop and think before we speak. How often I've said the wrong thing because I didn't really stop and think first.

No wheelbarrow religion

Despite what I am, Romans 8:4 is saying, "Look, I can change you. When you believe that I love you, nothing else can dominate you."

You can't find anything better than that. All that the world, the flesh, and the devil have to offer you is peanuts, just peanuts, in comparison.

"If you can have My love," says God, "My acceptance, My protection, My guarantee that all things will work together for good for you, then all the rest of this stuff is going to be so tawdry. It is not going to bother you."

Now that's the real way the Christian life is meant to be.

The Christian life is not meant to be pushing a wheelbarrow, sweating as you go. Yes, there is effort, there is conflict, and there is struggle in the Christian life. But it's not a self-initiated struggle all the time. Rather, it is what Ezekiel describes:

And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:27 KJV)

We automatically do what is in our heart and mind.

Forgiveness in looking to Jesus

So, what happens when you and I really believe the gospel? When we are really committed to the God who loved us above life itself—who humiliated himself for our sakes—suddenly all the motivating power we need for living the right life comes to us. And it is ours for as long as we look to Jesus.

Because we are weak and in the flesh, because of the plurality of things that tempt us in this world, there is not one of us who always looks to Jesus all the time. Every one of us at the end of the day has said, "Lord, I'm sorry I did such-and-such. I did those things I ought not to have done. And I left undone the things I ought to have done. Lord, continue to accept me in the Beloved."

My friends, don't ever think that when you make a mistake you have suddenly slipped out of justification. God is not waiting for your memory to work so that you can pray about all your sins, receive forgiveness, and thus be right with God again. No! Long before you ask for forgiveness, God gives it to you.

Often unaware of mistakes

I'm glad of that because we don't recognize most of our mistakes. Where would we be if forgiveness depended upon a good memory and a clear recognition of our sins? We'd be done for, because most of the things we do wrong we

are not even aware of.

When they are flagrant, we know them. If there's blood flowing, we recognize them. But we do many hurtful things where there's no blood flowing, and we don't even know we've done them. Sometimes when I get home after I've been out with Gill, she says, "Do you know what you said to so and so?" I ask, "What did I say?" She'll tell me, then add, "You shouldn't have said that because of these circumstances. . . ."

Gill is almost always right. (But I have to say **almost** always right.)

If I have to wait until my conscience corrects me, then I must hasten to pray and get my sins forgiven—what happens if I get killed in the meantime? That is why we must always return to Romans 8:1—there is no condemnation. (No condemnation, memory or no memory, whether your conscience is troubling you or not.)

You are always right with God when you are trusting in Jesus Christ. That's the good news.

Love in our hearts

This is also how "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us" (Romans 8:4 NIV).

Now, this doesn't mean that we suddenly become absolutely perfect. The bumper sticker that says: "I am not perfect, just forgiven" is always relevant. We are not perfect. We are just forgiven.

What Romans 8:4 means is this: Do you remember how Micah expresses it?

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

What does Jesus say is the first and great commandment? In two words: To love (see Mark 12:28–31).

When Paul writes that "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us" he doesn't mean we can say, "Wow! I'm suddenly doing everything right."

Who could live with you if you did everything perfectly? You would show up other people so shamefully they couldn't stand it.

What the text means is that the essence, or the intent of the law of God—which is love—has become the prevailing motivation of your heart.

