

# **Salvation by Faith Alone - The Book of Romans**

## **No Condemnation**

Lesson #9 for December 2, 2017

Scriptures: Romans 8:1-17.

1. In Romans 7 Paul's focus was on the fight with sin. In Romans 8 Paul gave his answer to that dilemma. After that conflict that was discussed in Romans 7, he suddenly said that there is no condemnation for those who "live in union with Christ Jesus." The secret is to learn how to walk in union with the Spirit as opposed to walking according to the flesh. How does that happen? Who is the one condemning the sinner? Is it God the Father? Is it Jesus Christ? They are doing all they can to bring salvation/healing to each sinner. Do doctors condemn their dying patients? What good would that do, they are dying anyway? God is trying to deal with sin. He is not trying to kill sinners! But, God has been terribly misrepresented from the pulpit!

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels.

The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abomination of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. Revelation 14:8; 17:2.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 536.2-3 (1888); *4SP*\* 356.2-3 (1884).

2. Read Romans 8:1-3. God sent His Son into this world to deal with sin. What is required for God to deal with sin? We need to remember that sin did not begin on this earth in the Garden of Eden. Sin began in heaven next to the throne of God. Lucifer was the first rebel. (Revelation 12:1-12)
3. The sin problem began when Satan started spreading subtle lies about God right in heaven. He claimed that God was not fair to angels. He claimed that he could run a better government than God does. He claimed a lot of false things that led one-third of the angels to join his side in the great controversy and started that war in heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9) So, how does God deal with all those lies spread by Satan? God has to tell the truth, consistently, over a long period of time, and prove that His government is best. To deal with lies, God has told the truth about such matters as sin leading to death. (Genesis 2:17) He did that by dying the second death, as Jesus did, which is the direct result of sin. Satan had claimed that sin does not lead to death! (Genesis 3:1-4) So, who are we to believe?
4. In order to deal with sin, God must do whatever is required to restore peace and harmony in the entire universe. Ephesians 1:7-10; Ephesians 3:7-10; Colossians 1:19-20 (*GNB*); and *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2 show us that the life and death of Christ on this earth were to answer many questions in the eyes of the onlooking universe.

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God

as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto [69] Me.” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*\* 68.2.

5. That is what is described as the “mystery” or “secret plan” of God. Paul was anxious to tell God’s “secret” to everyone! The church is supposed to help God in answering Satan’s accusations and questions. (1 Corinthians 4:9) **God is seeking to bring His entire creation—both in heaven and on this earth—back together into peace and harmony. It is much more than just paying some penalty for my sin.** How does the life and death of Jesus bring harmony back to the universe? Did the sinless angels get their questions answered from the life and death of Jesus? Did the fallen angels learn anything? Who was telling the truth in the Garden of Eden? In what sense did God need to be justified? (Romans 3:4, *KJV*)

6. The most difficult challenge for God is those of us who live on this earth and are fallen into sin. For the holy angels, trust must be reaffirmed. For us, trust must be established. By coming to this earth and living as a human being from cradle to crucifixion and then rising from the dead, Jesus Christ has come as close to the human family as He could. What has been the result?

Christ the Son of God took on humanity. It was the only way He could relate to us, could be our perfect example, and could become the Substitute who died in our stead. He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (*Rom. 8:3*). As a result, the righteous requirements of the law can be fulfilled in us (*Rom. 8:4*). In other words, Christ made victory over sin—as well as meeting the positive requirements of the law—possible for those who believe, not as a means of salvation but as the result of it. Obedience to law had not been, nor ever can be, a means of salvation. This was Paul’s message and Luther’s message. and it must be ours, as well.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Sabbath, November 25, 2017.

7. How did Christ actually accomplish that? Is our trust in God reestablished by looking to the life and death of Jesus? Is the problem a legal one? Or, a faith/trust problem? Don’t sinners need a radical attitude change? Was that done instantly by a forensic declaration of “not guilty”? Or, was it done gradually over a period of time through the quiet work of the Holy Spirit? Or, was it both? Compare Romans 7:24-25. Did Paul’s attitude change? Martin Luther was a lawyer, and he had lived under a church system that “required” a lot of works in order to be saved. He wanted to make it clear that all those works were not necessary. So, he said, “We are justified by faith alone.” (Romans 1:17) Luther added the word *alone*.

8. Read Romans 8:1 again. What does it mean to say that there is now no condemnation to those who are in union with Christ Jesus? Paul suggested that the person who is still living according to his old desires is under the condemnation of death. (Romans 7:11,13,24) Such a person is still living according to the law of sin. (Romans 7:23,25) He is also in a terrible state of wretchedness. (Romans 7:24)

But then the person surrenders to Jesus, and an immediate change is wrought in his or her [legal?] standing with God. Formerly condemned as a lawbreaker, **that person now stands perfect in the sight of God**, stands as if he or she had never sinned, because **the righteousness of Jesus Christ completely covers that person**. There is no more condemnation, not because the person is faultless, sinless, or worthy of eternal life (he or she is not!) but because Jesus' perfect life record stands in the person's stead; thus, there is no condemnation.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Sunday, November 26. [Bold type and content in brackets are added; parentheses and content in parentheses are in the original.]

How does that covering fit with Zechariah 3:1-5?

9. Who was condemning us while we were still in sin? Was it God? In what sense does Christ's righteousness "cover us"? Can guilt or sin be moved around or covered? Doesn't our guardian angel still know what kind of people we are? Does God the Father serving as a Judge (Or, is Jesus the Judge? [See John 5:22.]) in the courts of heaven not have 20/20 vision? When He looks at us, is He unable to see the truth about us? Are the heavenly records defective because of missing data? **Is His omniscience compromised by this change? Or, does God just choose to overlook our sins? If so, why did Jesus have to die to make that possible?** Who else is present at the judgment? (Daniel 7:9-10)
10. It is important to note that in this chapter, Paul suggested that there are only two choices. We can serve the sin master; or, we can serve the Son Master. There is no other option. If we are serving sin, we are still slaves. If we are serving Christ, we have freedom.

Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery.... While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages\** 466.3.

11. Could you outline or explain briefly in a paragraph or two exactly how Christ frees us from the condemnation of sin? God is challenging us to be His sons, daughters, and heirs. We must reject the lies of Satan. We must learn to trust God. This changes everything. Our past history does not really matter. Does this take all the fun out of life? Or, does sin have terrible consequences even in this life?
12. Is it really possible to be instantly changed from being a rebellious child of the Devil to being a perfectly obedient child of God? Our ultimate goal is to be Christ-like. Is that easy?

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages\** 668.3.

How does that compare with your life?

13. How do we actually take on the characteristics of Jesus Christ? When you think about God—especially the Father—do you think of Him more as a Father? Or, more like a Mother?

Or, maybe a Brother or Sister? Or, in your mind, is He more like a police officer? Or, a judge?

14. Some Christians emphasize the fact that we “die with Christ.” What does that mean? When does that actually happen? Is that the truth about baptism? Is it a mystical experience? We love to believe that we are in charge of our lives! Every time we commit a sin, we are saying to God: “I believe that, right now, it will be more fun or more rewarding or better for me to do my will instead of your will! I will come back to your plan later.”
15. There are many things that the law cannot do for us. Read Romans 8:3-4. Notice what God does for us that the law cannot do: 1) God dealt with sin; 2) He condemned sin in the flesh (it has awful consequences); and 3) He met the righteous demands of the law. Are those demands of the law equal to demands from God? Does the law have any right to demand anything? What is it that we can now do that we could not do before? Can we live a life that meets the righteous demands of the law? Can we crucify the flesh? (Galatians 5:24) Could we actually reflect the character of Christ?
16. Have you thought about the implications of what it means to be a slave? Is your life a life of slavery to sin? Remember that “sin pays its wage: death!” (See Romans 6:23.) Does God declare us right? Or, does He actually set us right? Is there a difference?
17. Read Romans 8:5-8. Do these verses carefully identify the differences between living according to one’s old worldly self and living according to the Spirit? Do they make it clear that we cannot obey the law and that we cannot please God so long as we are living the old worldly kind of lives. We are, in fact, in a state of enmity against God. Is God’s plan really the right way to live? We must discover how to learn from other people’s mistakes.
18. Paul was trying to convince a group of formerly-Jewish Christians that Jesus Christ—the Messiah promised in the Old Testament—was the One on whom they needed to fasten their hopes instead of looking to the old Jewish system. What would you say if you were in Paul’s place trying to convince them?
19. Read Romans 8:9-14. In these verses we are clearly told that if we are not living according to the Spirit, we do not belong to Christ. However, if we live in union with Christ, “the Spirit becomes life for us”—“He is our righteousness.” What do these phrases actually mean? Compare these verses in *The Message*—paraphrase of the Bible.

**Romans 8:9-11:** But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won’t know what we’re talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God’s terms. It stands to reason, doesn’t it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he’ll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s!

**12-14** So don’t you see that we don’t owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There’s nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God’s Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!—Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language*\* (Romans 8:9–14). Colorado Springs, CO:

NavPress. [Content in parentheses is in the original.]

20. What does it mean to use the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body? Have you experienced that personally?
21. In light of all the suggestions about how God does so many things for us and on our behalf, what does it mean to die daily? We are never supposed to serve sin again! Is it easy to stop sinning? How do we keep our eyes focused on Jesus Christ?

Thus, after conversion there still will be a struggle against sin. The difference is that the person in whom the Spirit dwells now has divine power for victory. Furthermore, because the person has been so miraculously freed from the slave master of sin, **he or she is obligated never to serve sin again....**

The new relationship is described as freedom from fear. Slaves are in bondage. They live in a state of constant fear of their master. They stand to gain nothing from their long years of service.

Not so with those who accept Jesus Christ. First, they render voluntary service. Second, they serve without fear, for “perfect love casteth out fear” (1 *John 4:18*). Third, adopted as children, they become heirs to an inheritance of infinite worth.—*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 115-116. [Bold type is added.]

The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary,\** vol. 6, 1077.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy\** 555.1.

22. Is this the only way that such an incredible change can take place? Don’t children become like their parents? So, what are we putting into our minds? TV? Internet? Movies? Bible? How does God determine who is safe to save?

Jesus came to our world to bring divine power to man, that through his grace, we might be transformed into his likeness. When it is in the heart to obey God, [Would you say during the struggle of Romans 7 it was in Paul’s heart to obey God? Remember that the heart is where a man does his thinking. He said: “With my mind I serve the Law of God.” He wanted to do what was right. It was in his heart to obey God. Wasn’t it? When it is in the heart to obey God,] when efforts are put forth to this end, [there is an effort there, there is a struggle there, there is a willingness to perform,] Jesus accepts this disposition [this desire to do it,] and effort as man’s best service and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit.—Ellen G. White, Morning Talk at Basel, Switzerland, September 17, 1885; *The Signs of the Times,\** June 16, 1890, par. 6; *1SM\** 382.2; *FW\** 50.1; *ML\** 250.6; *NL\** 37.3; *TMK\** 229.4. [Content in brackets is added.]

23. Read Romans 8:15-17. What are the major changes that take place when we stop being slaves to sin and become children of God? The child of God will sincerely want to serve Him. And he can do so without fear. He has the right to an inheritance that will continue forever.

24. Can we be certain that we have passed through this kind of experience?

The inward witness of the Spirit confirms our acceptance. While it is not safe to go by feeling merely, those who have followed the light of the Word to the best of their understanding will hear an inward authenticating Voice assuring them that they have been accepted as children of God.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Thursday, November 30.

25. What is the source of this “inward voice”? Can we trust every inward voice that we hear?

26. When Christians make the choice to live a Christ-like life and enter into the experience of baptism, suggesting they have died to their old selves and want to live a new life in Christ, they enter upon a lifelong work. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. Our baptismal vows must be renewed every day. We must decide day by day and moment by moment to avoid, as far as possible, the evil in the world around us on television, on the Internet, even in the suggestions and conversations of others around us. Instead, we must choose to focus our minds and hearts on God. That is our only safety.

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness [98] is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons\** 97.3.

27. What does it take to make such a paradigm shift?

Think of the indwelling as a deep friendship. When we live in community with our friends, what they say and who they are rub off on us. We begin to think, speak, and act like them. And we have the same influence on them. If we came to the place where we fully submitted to the will of our friend, turned our mind and will completely over to what he or she willed and desired, we could say that we were “indwelt” by that friend. In the same way, Jesus prayed in John 17:20-23 that the disciples would be one as He and the Father are one. The disciples were not able to enmesh their beings with one another anymore than we can: and yet, they are to be one with one another and with Jesus in the same way as Jesus is one with the Father. This oneness is the sharing of mind, will, and purpose.—*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 123.

28. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul said: “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Was that true only in Paul’s day? Or, is it still true today? Why do we need to suffer persecution in order to prepare us to live the peaceful, harmonious, and joyous life in heaven? Is it that Satan is determined to attack God’s people? Do we need to be tested?

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