

“Those [People] Who Belong to Christ”



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Romans 8:1–7.

MEMORY VERSE: “Those [people] who belong to Christ [Jesus] will not suffer the punishment of sin” (Romans 8:1, NLV).



People who refuse to accept Jesus will be slaves to sin. They will not be able to do what they want to do.

ROMANS 8 is Paul’s answer to Romans 7. In Romans 7, Paul speaks about defeat, failure, and guilt. In Romans 8, the guilt is gone. Freedom and victory in Jesus take guilt’s place in Paul’s life.

Paul gives a warning in Romans 7 to those who refuse to accept Jesus Christ. What happens if you refuse? Then the awful experience in Romans 7 will be yours. You will be a slave to sin. You will not be able to do what you choose to do. In Romans 8, Paul says Jesus offers to free us from sin. Jesus gives us the freedom to do the good that our evil hearts will not allow us to do.

Paul tells us that the freedom Jesus offers us was bought for us at a price we could never hope to repay. Jesus, the Son of God, became human. Jesus became human so He could connect with us and be our perfect Example. Jesus became our Substitute who died in our place. “He came to earth in a body of flesh” (Romans 8:3, NLV). We can do everything the law asks us to do because Jesus did all these things for us (Romans 8:4). Jesus made it possible for us to have victory over sin and obey the law. We obey because we are saved. But obedience to the law *never* can save us. Both Paul and Luther preached this message. We must preach this same message to everyone too.

IN JESUS CHRIST (Romans 8:1)

“Those who belong to Christ will not suffer the punishment of sin” (Romans 8:1, NLV). What does “not suffer the punishment of sin” mean?

“Those who belong to Christ” is wording that appears often in Paul’s writings. The people who “belong” to Jesus accept Him as their Savior. They trust Him fully. They decide to make Jesus’ way of life their own way of life. They are “married” to Jesus.

Paul shows how different the wording “those who belong to Christ” is from the experience in Romans 7. In Romans 7, Paul describes the person who is a slave to sin. This person is convinced by the Spirit to do the right thing. But this person has not fully given his life to Jesus. This person is controlled by evil desires. This person is judged guilty (Romans 7:11, 13, 24). He serves the “law of sin” (Romans 7:23, NLV). His life is awful (Romans 7:24).

But then this person gives his life to Jesus. A change in this person’s life takes place right away. Now this person is innocent in God’s eyes. God views this person as if he never sinned. Jesus’ holy life covers this person. He is no longer guilty. Is he no longer guilty because he is not a sinner anymore? Or is he all of the sudden worthy of everlasting life? None of those ideas is true! Instead, Jesus’ perfect life record takes the place of this person’s record of sin. So, he is no longer guilty.

Read Romans 8:2. As Paul’s words show us in this verse, what frees a person from being a slave to sin?

The “law of the Spirit” (Nlrv) means Jesus’ plan for saving humans. This law is very different from “the law of sin.” Romans 7 describes this law as sin’s power to rule our lives. Sin’s power “brings death” (Romans 8:2, Nlrv) to everyone who serves sin. But Jesus’ law brings life and freedom.

“Every person who refuses to give himself to God is controlled by another power. This person is not in control of his life. . . . He thinks he is doing what he wants. But he obeys the wishes of the prince of darkness. Jesus came to break our ‘chains’ of slavery to sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 466, adapted. Are you a slave to sin? Or are you free in Jesus? How can you tell?



The holy life of Jesus covers the person who used to be a slave to sin.

WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO (Romans 8:3, 4)

The law has power to point to our need to be saved. But the law cannot do for us the thing we need most. By the word “law,” we mean (1) the Ten Commandments, also named the moral law, and (2) the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law explained the use of animals in the Jewish worship plan. God gave Moses this plan to give to His people. But the ceremonial law and the moral law could not save us from the guilt and punishment of death that sin brings. For that, we need Jesus.

Read Romans 8:3, 4. As Paul shows in these verses, what did Jesus do that the law could not do?



Obedience could not save us from the punishment of death that breaking the law brings. Only Jesus can save us.

God gave us a way to be healed from sin. God sent us “His own Son. [Jesus] came to earth in a body of flesh which could be tempted [led] to sin as we in our bodies can be. . . . [Jesus] took away the power sin had over us” (Romans 8:3, NLV). Now we can do everything the law asks us to do. We could not do anything the law asked when we were “living by the Law” (Romans 6:14, NLV). But now we can obey the law “because of God’s loving-favor” (NLV). God gives this gift to us because of “what Christ Jesus has done” (Romans 8:2, NLV).

We must remember that doing everything the law asks does not mean we can save ourselves by obeying the law. We cannot be saved by our own works. Not ever. But what Paul means in Romans 8:2 is that God gives us power to live a life of obedience. We have “nailed our sinful [full of sin] old selves on the cross” (Galatians 5:24). Now our lives show Jesus to everyone.

To “live” (Nlrv) or “walk” (NKJV) in Romans 8:4 is a word picture. This word picture was used in Paul’s day to mean “how to act in the right way.” The wording “our sinful old selves” (NLV) is a word picture for the person who has not been made new by Jesus. When we “walk” after “what our sinful old selves tell us to do,” we are controlled by selfish desires. But when we live the way the Holy Spirit wants us to live, we do everything the law asks us to do. We can obey the law only with the Holy Spirit’s help. Only in Jesus can we find freedom to do everything the law asks us to do. Without Jesus, we cannot obey the law. The person who is a slave to sin finds it impossible to do the good he or she wants to do (read Romans 7:15, 18).

**CONTROLLED BY SIN OR
CONTROLLED BY THE SPIRIT (Romans 8:5, 6)**

“Those who let their sinful [full of sin] old selves tell them what to do live under that power of their sinful old selves. But those who let the Holy Spirit tell them what to do are under His power” (Romans 8:5, NLV). “The thoughts of a person ruled by sin bring death. But the mind ruled by the Spirit brings life and peace” (Romans 8:6, NlrV). Think about the truth that these verses teach us. What do they say to you about how you should live your life?

“Under,” in Romans 8:5, comes from the Greek word *kata*. In this verse, it means “agreeing with.” “Thoughts,” in Romans 8:6, means “to set [put] the mind on.” One group whom Paul describes puts their minds on giving in to their natural desires. The other group puts their minds on letting the Spirit lead them. They choose to follow the Spirit’s wishes. The two groups live and act differently. Why? Because the mind decides what we will do.

Paul shows in Romans 8:7, 8 that the mind “ruled by the power of sin” (Romans 8:7, NlrV) is not able to do something. What is it that this mind cannot do?

When we give in to the desires of the sinful [full of sin] old self, we turn against God. People who make this choice will not be interested in doing things that make God happy. These people even may be openly breaking God’s law.

What happens when we are not connected to Jesus? Then it is impossible to obey God’s law. Paul goes back to this idea often: without Jesus, we cannot obey the law.

Paul wanted to show the Jews that they needed more than the *Torah* [law] to save them. Their lives showed they were guilty of doing the same sins that the Gentiles did (Romans 2). Gentiles were non-Jews. Both Gentiles and Jewish believers alike needed the Messiah. The Messiah was the One God chose to save His people from sin. Without the Messiah, God’s people would be sin’s slaves. They would not be able to escape from sin’s power.

Paul’s teaching about the Messiah was Paul’s message to the Jews who could not understand why the old plan of being saved was no longer enough. Paul told the Jews that everything they had done was good. But they also needed the Messiah, who had now come.



We must stay connected to Jesus. Then we will be able to obey His law.

CHRIST IN YOU (Romans 8:9–14)

Paul talks some more about the choices that everyone must make: (1) to live by God's Spirit or (2) to give in to sin. One choice leads to everlasting life. The other choice leads to death. We must choose to live by one power or the other. There is no other choice. As Jesus said, "Anyone who is not with me is against me. Anyone who does not gather sheep with me scatters them" (Matthew 12:30, NIV). The truth does not get much plainer than that.

Read Romans 8:9–14. As these verses show, what does God promise to those who give themselves fully to Jesus?



“Anyone who is not with me is against me. Anyone who does not gather sheep with me scatters them” (Matthew 12:30, NIV).

Paul shows how different the life “ruled by the power of sin” (Romans 8:9, NIV) is from the life ruled by the “Spirit of Christ [Jesus]” (NIV). The Spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit. Maybe Paul names the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Jesus to point out that the Holy Spirit shows us Jesus. Jesus lives in us by the Holy Spirit's power (Romans 8:9, 10).

In Romans 8:9–14, Paul goes back to a word picture he used in Romans 6:1–11. That word picture is baptism. Here, Paul uses baptism to show us how our “sinful [full of sin] old selves” (Romans 8:9, NIV) are destroyed. “Our old life, our old sinful [full of sin] self, was nailed to the cross with Christ” (Romans 6:6, NIV). Baptism shows we are not only covered in a grave of water. But we come up out from the “grave of water” to a new life in Jesus. This new life means the old self is put to death. We need to make the choice everyday and minute by minute to put the old self to death. God does not destroy our freedom. We can sin even after our old lives are destroyed. That is the reason why Paul warned the believers in the Colossian church: “Remove from your life all evil desires” (Colossians 3:5, NIV).

There will continue to be a fight against sin after we belong to Jesus. But the difference is that the Holy Spirit now lives in us. The Spirit gives us power over sin. God freed us by a miracle. God freed us from the evil slave master named sin. So, we never need to serve sin again.

The Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead. He is the same Spirit who will live in us if we let Him. What stops us from trusting in this power?

GOD ADOPTS US AS HIS CHILDREN (Romans 8:15)

Read Romans 8:15. In this verse, how does Paul describe our new connection to Jesus? What hope do we find in this promise? How do we make this promise real in our lives?

Paul describes our new connection to Jesus as freedom from fear. But a slave is not free. A slave lives in fear that never ends. He fears his master. A slave will get little to nothing from his master for his long years of service.

But people who accept Jesus have hope. They choose to serve Jesus without fear. The Bible tells us “perfect love puts fear out of our hearts” (1 John 4:18, NLV). God adopts these believers as His children. God gives His new children many riches and gifts that many cannot buy.

“We become slaves to sin when we try to save ourselves by our good behavior. We become slaves when we try in our own power to do everything that the law asks. There is hope for us only when we accept God’s agreement with Abraham. This agreement is a contract of grace. [Grace is God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin.] We enter this contract of grace by faith in Jesus.”—Ellen G. White Comments [Thoughts], *The SDA Bible Commentary [Explanation]*, volume 6, page 1077, adapted.

Read Romans 8:16. As this verse shows, what helps us to know for sure that God accepts us as His children?

The Holy Spirit tells us that God accepts us. Remember, it is not safe to trust only in feeling. But people who do everything God tells them to do will hear a voice in their hearts. This voice tells them that God accepts them as His children.

Romans 8:17 tells us that we are God’s children. God shall give us His wonderful riches and gifts because He has adopted us. We do not earn these gifts. Instead, God gives us these gifts because we have a new connection with Him. We stand without guilt before Him. Then God gives us His gifts by grace. He gives us His gift because Jesus died for us.

What changes must you make in your life to have a closer connection or walk with Jesus?



Those who have followed what God has told them to do will hear a voice within them. This voice tells them that they have been accepted as children of God.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God’s plan to save us does not mean we will live lives without suffering and trouble while we wait for Jesus to come back to this earth. Instead, God’s plan asks us to follow Jesus in the same path that Jesus walked. Jesus gave up the desire to put Himself first before other people and God. We must follow Jesus’ example. Jesus suffered blame for doing right. . . . When we suffer this same pain, then we show to other people that Jesus lives within us. We must suffer as Jesus suffered. Jesus uses our suffering to teach us precious lessons. Jesus uses our suffering to help make us ready to share in the wonderful life He has for us in heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings [God’s Favor]*, pages 30, 31, adapted.

“The plan God made to save us from sin is a chain that God let down from His throne. This “chain” is long enough to reach down to the bottom of the pit where we have sunk. Jesus can lift the worst sinners out of the pit of evil they have fallen into. Jesus can put these sinners where they can be accepted as the children of God. Then God will give His new children the riches that He gives to Jesus. These riches will never fade away.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 7, page 229, adapted.

“Jesus paid the price for our sin. No one needs to be Satan’s slave. Christ stands before us as our Helper. He has all the power needed to save us.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 309, adapted.



“Jesus can lift the worst of sinners out of the pit of evil.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How can we make God’s promises of victory real in our own lives? God offers us many gifts in Jesus. So, why do we continue to fail to become what we really were meant to be in God?
- ② What are the ways, every day, in which you can “think about what the Spirit wants” (Romans 8:5, NIV)? What does this verse mean? What does the Spirit want? What do you watch, read, or think about? How might these things make it hard to think about the things that the Spirit wants you to do?
- ③ Think more about this idea that we are on one side or the other in the war between good and evil. What does this important truth tell us? How should this truth change the way we live and the choices we make, even in the “little” things in life?