

Romans 8:1 1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,^[a]

Central idea – When you set yourself to seriously pursue holiness, you will begin to realize what an awful sinner you are. And if you are not firmly rooted in the gospel and have not learned to preach it to yourself every day, you will soon become discouraged and will slack off in your pursuit of holiness.

Developing the Discipline of Grace

1. What is the Gospel?
2. Believers who base their everyday relationship with God on a good-day performance are little different than unbelievers who think they will go to Heaven because they've been "good enough". How does the Apostle Paul speak to this in Romans 3:19-26?

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all^[a] who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

3. The word *faith* is a noun and has no verbal form in English. Instead the verb *believe* is used, as in Romans 3:22. What does it mean to believe in Jesus? (That is, what is it we are to believe, or put our faith in?)
4. Romans 3:19-26 is loaded with theological terms that demand further explanation if we are to use them in conversation with our non-Christian friends. Explain the following terms in your own words, as if you were talking to someone with no biblical background. That is, do not use Christian jargon or long theological propositions, but do use secular analogies, synonyms or short conversational phrases.

Verse 19 the law (of God)

Verse 20 declared righteous

Verse 20 (conscious of) sin

Verse 21 the Law and the Prophets

Verse 21 righteousness from God

Verse 22 faith

Verse 23 glory of God

Verse 24 justified freely

Verse 24 grace

Verse 24 redemption

Verse 25 sacrifice of atonement

Verse 25 blood of Christ

Verse 26 justice of God

Verse 26 justification of the believer

5.a. How would you feel if God justified convicted serial murderers like Ted Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer by grace through faith? Why would you feel that way?

5b. How would you feel if they were pardoned by the state after sincerely repenting of their sin? Why?

5c. What is the difference between “justification” (by God) and a “pardon” (by a governor or president)?

6. Consider Paul’s bold statements in Romans 8:1,31,33 in light of a recent bad day or failure you may have experienced. Despite what Paul says is objectively true about our standing with God, occasionally our conscience tells us we are under condemnation. Because of our frequent failures before God, we do not feel God is for us but rather must surely be against us. How then do we bring the verdict of conscience into line with the verdict of Heaven? 1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,^[a] who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies.

7. “The blood of Christ”, in connection with our salvation, is a favorite expression of New Testament writers. It occurs about thirty times, not just in Romans 3. What does it mean to have faith in the blood?

Romans 3:25

1 Corinthians 11:25-26

Hebrews 9:1-27

8. What aspects of the gospel do you need to become more familiar with? What do you need to preach to yourself every day?

9. Meditate and memorize or more of the following gospel texts. All these wonderful promises of forgiveness draw your attention to the atoning death of Christ, the basis for pursuing holiness.

Psalm 103:12

Isaiah 38:17

Isaiah 43:25

Isaiah 53:6

Micah 7:19

Galatians 3:13

Colossians 1:22

Colossians 2:13

WHAT'S THE POINT?

We will consider a number of factors that go into the pursuit of holiness in the future. But no factor is more important than learning to preach the gospel to yourself every day.