

Nov 6/22 – Leader's Guide - Read Romans 8:1-11

1. Paul says there is therefore now no condemnation for Christians. But how come Christians continue to feel pangs of condemnation, either from within themselves or from others? How do we mitigate these real and powerful feelings of condemnation?

Even though condemnation is no longer a possibility or reality for the Christian, there are residual effects of condemnation that loiter in our minds, hearts, bodies, and souls. For so long, the body of the Christian was oppressed by sin and the demands of the law, we've known nothing but the dominating force of the law against us, weakened by our own flesh. But when the Spirit has come to dwell in us, Christians are immediately set free, but there is still the scars, the wounds, and the trauma of sin and the law in our lives. It will take time to heal, to recover, to work out new and lasting patterns of freedom in our hearts.

2. Paul says that the Holy Spirit frees us from the flesh. What is the "flesh" and how do we experience it in our day-to-day life?

Flesh means the corrupted aspects of our humanity, like rust on metal, mould on wood, cancer on healthy tissue. Christians experience the flesh today as the instincts, desires, and compulsions that run against the laws of God, laws in which the Spirit of God has written in the hearts of Christians to love and cherish. Despite freedom from the flesh, the flesh still exists in the Christian and battle is waged between the two realities (or as Paul says, the "laws") of the flesh and the Spirit. And so, the Christian experiences more internal struggle, moral dilemma, and spiritual warfare in themselves than someone who is not a Christian. And this is a good thing! The defeat of the flesh is absolute in Christ, but its death in the Christian takes time and will require the Spirit's power and work to slowly root out the core of the flesh's hold.

3. In our warfare against the flesh, Paul says to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. What does it mean to "set our minds" and what are the "things of the Spirit"?

Setting our minds means to mind the business, to be fixated, to be absorbed and focused. It means to pay more attention to the Spirit. The things of the Spirit are His fruit, His work, His ministry, His Person--and that means to also pay attention to the Gospel, to Jesus, to His teachings, to the cross. The things of the Spirit are everything pertaining to the Christian faith, not least the laws and commands of Scripture, and more especially the promises and graces of God.

4. The Holy Spirit frees our mortal bodies from the tyranny of death. In the sermon, Orvin said that this can mean that Christians are freed from the business and culture of death for the here and now. What does this mean?

The business and culture of death are the cultural, infrastructural, political, and commercial enterprises that contribute to the destruction of the human body, the human psyche, the human society, and the earth. For example, in the sermon, Orvin

mentioned medically assisted deaths in hospitals, abortion-on-demand, elderly neglect and abuse, ecological catastrophes due to anthropogenic causes, overextraction leading to climate change, overconsumption and excessive diets that cause preventable diseases, etc. Christians are resurrection people and so must live our earthly lives for the promotion and cultivation of life, and not death and decay. This means practically a change in our diets, our voting decisions, our buying/investing decisions, our consumption habits, the way we talk of others and to others.