NO CONDEMNATION AND NEVER-FAILING LOVE

Romans 8 is one of the high points of Scripture. It practically begs us to bask in the goodness of God. It begins with the assurance that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1), and it ends with the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:35–39). Wow! No condemnation. No separation. Bask. In. This.

Of course, a lot of life happens between God’s promise of no condemnation and His assurance of no separation from His love. We learn to live lives that fulfill God’s law as we are empowered by the Spirit (Romans 8:4). God’s Spirit begins to give life to the body of death that was so frustrating in the previous chapter (Romans 7:24; Romans 8:10, 11). The same Spirit helps us resolve the tension between our desire to do good and the weakness of our sinful flesh by helping us put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13). All the while, we live in the joyful assurance that we are children of God and that we have an everlasting inheritance (Romans 8:14–17). When we suffer, we trust that God will work all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

We also groan, and when we groan, we don’t groan alone. We groan with all creation as we wait for the time when all creation will be liberated from the bondage of decay to the glorious liberty of God’s children (Romans 8:19–23). More than that, the Spirit groans along with us, helping us in our great need (Romans 8:26).
Write out Romans 8 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out Romans 8:31–39. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
UNSTUCK

Romans 7 ends with Paul’s anguished cry, “O wretched man that I am!” (Romans 7:24). Inwardly, Paul delights in God’s law (Romans 7:22) and longs to do good (Romans 7:18). Unfortunately, he finds himself unable to live out his calling fully (Romans 7:18–23). The dissonance between what Paul wills to do and what he actually does fills him with a sense of wretchedness. He is stuck painfully between two worlds—the world Adam created and the new world Jesus made. The world of Adam is a world of sin and death, and the world of Jesus is a world of righteousness and life (Romans 5:12–21). The tension between these worlds can be excruciating.

Like Paul, we are stuck between Adam’s world and Jesus’ world, and we groan under the weight and pain of our fallen condition. Indeed, all creation groans right along with us (Romans 8:22).

What hope and assurance can be offered to the groaning believer stuck between the world of Adam and the world of Jesus? Paul’s hopeful answer is, “‘There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit’” (Romans 8:1). In Jesus, we have the assurance that we are not condemned.

Paul outlines systematically why those who are in Christ are not condemned. His reasoning is that Jesus’ death transforms our relationship with the law. In Christ, the law is the law of the Spirit and life. Outside of Christ, the law is a law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). When we become believers, we are not condemned because the law is no longer a law of sin and death. It is a law of the Spirit and life.

This change in our relationship with God’s law happens because God acted decisively in Christ. He sent Jesus to earth to become fully human. Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. On the cross, God condemned all of humanity’s sin in the flesh of Jesus (Romans 8:4). On the cross, Jesus took upon Himself all of the condemnation that sin deserved. By taking our condemnation, Jesus changed the believer’s relationship with the law from one of sin and death to one of Spirit and life.

Paul assures us that all who are in Christ Jesus, who feel the wretchedness of being stuck between Adam’s and Jesus’ world, are not condemned because Jesus took our condemnation and forever changed our relationship with the law.
The Christian worldview is fundamentally hopeful. Even though the fall unleashed death and unspeakable tragedy upon our world, everything that was lost will be restored with interest. For example, everything Job lost was restored double (Job 42:10). The gift of grace is “much more” than the terrible consequences of the fall (Romans 5:9, 15, 17). Ultimately, what God restores will be even better than what was originally planned. We see this in the creation of the new heavens and earth (Revelation 21, 22). Through the fall, Eden was lost, but what is promised is much more than Eden. It is a garden city filled with the glory of God and the glory of the nations (Revelation 21:11, 26).

In contrast, the worldview of secularism and naturalism is fundamentally hopeless. In that view, we came from nothing and become nothing. Humanity is nothing more than the product of evolutionary biological processes, which are themselves governed by the laws of chemistry and physics. In a naturalistic worldview, we are nothing more than biological machines that respond to the stimuli of the environment. All love, morality, purpose, and meaning are merely illusions created by biological processes. If humanity continues to exist long enough, the sun will eventually cool along with the rest of the universe, and all life will cease to exist.

The Christian worldview is so filled with hope that the sufferings of this life are not even worthy of being compared with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). Our future is so indescribably beautiful that any suffering we now face is infinitesimally small by comparison.

The Christian hope can sustain us in great suffering because it is forward looking. Hope takes our eyes off the painful present and fixes them upon a peaceful future. As believers, we are saved in hope. We look forward to the restoration of all creation, including our bodies (Romans 8:19–23). This is our hope-filled future.

The fascinating thing about hope is that people don’t hope for what they now possess (Romans 8:24). Hope is about anticipation. Hope is about waiting. Hope is about patience. As believers, we wait patiently in hope and assurance, because the same God who invited us to have faith also justified us (Romans 8:30). This God has promised that one day He will glorify us (Romans 8:30). In the meantime, He has predestined us to become like His Son Jesus (Romans 8:29).
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Galatians 4:1–7
Galatians 5:16–26
Hebrews 2:16–18
Revelation 21:1–4

What other verses come to mind about the Spirit and the love of God?

Review your memorized verse from Romans 8.
God’s Love: The Final Answer

When bad things happen to us or those we love, it is easy to wonder if God is upset with us. It is easy to think that God must be angry or that He doesn’t love and care for us. The good news is that God finally and fully answered these concerns through the coming of Jesus. Through Jesus, God is shouting that He is on our side and that no one can be against us (Romans 8:31).

No matter what we go through, we can be confident that God is on our side because He gave us His best gift when He gave us His Son. And if He already gave us His best gift, why would He not freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)? Furthermore, we can be sure that God is on our side because He has justified us. If God has justified us, can any charge against us stick? Of course not! He is the highest court in the land. If He has issued a verdict of justification, no other court can reverse His decision (Romans 8:33). He is on our side!

The truth is that God wasn’t just on our side in the past when He gave Jesus to die for our sins. God is on our side right now. The intercession of Jesus is evidence of this. Jesus is representing us in the presence of the Father. His ongoing presence and His death and resurrection ensure that we won’t be condemned (Romans 8:34).

God is on our side!

Does our suffering somehow indicate that God has abandoned us? No. Never! It doesn’t matter what we go through. No tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword is evidence that God has removed His love from us (Romans 8:35). The life, death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus stand as monuments of God’s never-failing love for us. Even if it feels as though we are sheep for the slaughter, we are still loved (Romans 8:36).

Nothing in the present and nothing in the future can change the fact of God’s love in Christ. Not even death or any heavenly or earthly power is evidence that God has changed His mind about His love for us (Romans 8:38). Nothing can pry us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:39). Nothing.

So when we suffer and when we hurt, we can take comfort in God’s love and His promise to work all things together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).
THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

“The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness, we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked. Through the prophet He declared of Himself, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.’ Psalm 40:8. And when among men He said, ‘The Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.’ John 8:29.

“The apostle Paul clearly presents the relation between faith and the law under the new covenant. He says: ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.’ ‘For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh’—it could not justify man, because in his sinful nature he could not keep the law—’God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 5:1; 3:31; 8:3, 4.

“God’s work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. . . . He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. The great principles of love to God, which He set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what He had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’ Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Leviticus 19:18. The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God’s claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him ‘with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’ James 1:17.”

Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 372, 373.
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

When have you felt God fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law in your life?

When have you struggled to put to death the deeds of the body?

Have you ever been unable to pray because of distress? How is the promise that the Spirit intercedes for us when we cannot pray helpful in that circumstance?

How should Christians relate to the groaning and suffering of creation?

How has God’s love comforted you in suffering or loss?

Describe a time when God unexpectedly worked something bad out for good.

What is your comfort level in calling God with an affectionate term such as “Abba,” “Papa,” or “Dad”?