

The Book of Romans, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: Life in the Spirit; No Condemnation

Romans 8:1-39

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Romans 8 is the soaring climax of the first great section of the letter, and it answers the cry of chapter 7 with the life of the Spirit and the assurance of God's love. A great deal is gloriously at stake. Paul proclaims no condemnation for those in Christ, the indwelling and empowering Spirit, putting sin to death by the Spirit, adoption as God's children, the certainty of future glory, the Spirit's help in our weakness, God's working of all things toward good, and a love from which nothing can separate the believer. The teacher should be ready to unfold each of these and to keep the chapter's note of hope and triumph central, for this chapter is meant to lift believers up.

Two matters call for doctrinal care. First, verses 29 to 30 (foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified) touch the language of election and predestination, which Lessons 10 and 11 will treat at length. Here the teacher can keep the touch lighter, presenting God's gracious, predetermined purpose to save and to conform His people to the image of His Son, without yet diving into the Calvinist-Arminian debate; the focus in this passage is God's loving commitment to bring His people all the way home. Second, and more pressing for this lesson, the magnificent assurance of verses 31 to 39 must be taught fully and joyfully, yet held together with the rest of Scripture. Paul says nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ. This is a real and unshakable assurance, and the teacher should let it comfort the class richly. But it must not be turned into the doctrine of once saved, always saved, an unconditional eternal security that ignores the many warnings of Scripture that a Christian can fall away by abandoning faith (Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:26-31; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22). The right balance: nothing outside us, no enemy, no circumstance, no power, can tear us from God's love; God will never fail us or stop loving us. What Scripture warns against is our own departure, the abandoning of faith. The believer who remains in Christ is utterly secure in a love that will never let go.

This chapter is profoundly formative. It is meant to free the guilt-ridden, assure the fearful, comfort the suffering, and lift the eyes of the weary to coming glory. The teacher should help students move from living under self-condemnation to resting in no condemnation, from relating to God as a fearful servant to crying Abba, Father, and from being crushed by suffering to being more than conquerors through the One who loved us. The disciple being formed here is a person who lives by the Spirit, knows themselves to be a beloved child and heir, and is secure and unafraid in the love of God in Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul begins, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death (vv. 1-2), explaining that God did what the law could not do by sending His own Son to condemn sin in the flesh (vv. 3-4). What does it mean that there is no condemnation for those in Christ, and how did God accomplish through Christ what the law was powerless to do?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the glorious opening verse and let it land: there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (v. 1). The teacher should help students feel the totality of it. Condemnation is the sentence the guilty deserve; for those in Christ, that sentence has been removed completely. Not reduced, not suspended, but gone.

Explain the basis. Paul says the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death (v. 2). What the law could not do, because our flesh kept breaking it, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and condemning sin in the flesh (v. 3). On the cross, the condemnation our sin deserved fell on Christ. That is why there is none left for us. The teacher should keep the cross at the center: no condemnation for us because full condemnation fell on Him.

Note the location of this freedom: for those who are in Christ Jesus. The no condemnation is not a general amnesty for everyone regardless of relationship to Christ; it belongs to those who are in Him, joined to Him by an obedient faith (as chapter 6 described in baptism). Being in Christ is the sphere where this freedom is found.

Show the goal in verse 4: that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. God did not free us from condemnation so that we could keep sinning, but so that, by the Spirit, the righteous life the law aimed at could actually begin to be lived in us. Freedom from condemnation and a transformed life go together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, the sentence fully removed (8:1)
- The cross as the basis, condemnation fell on Christ in our place (8:3)
- Being in Christ as the sphere of this freedom, entered by an obedient faith
- Freedom from condemnation leading to a Spirit-empowered righteous life (8:4)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that there is no condemnation for those in Christ?
- How did God accomplish through Christ what the law was powerless to do?
- Why does Paul tie this freedom specifically to being in Christ?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul announces freedom from condemnation for those in Christ (v. 1). Yet many believers still carry a heavy, ongoing sense of guilt and self-condemnation. Do you live as someone under no condemnation, or do you still punish yourself for past sins? What would it look like this week to actually believe and rest in the verdict God has already given?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes the doctrine of no condemnation and asks whether students actually live in it. The teacher should address the gap between the verdict God has given and the way many believers still treat themselves.

Name the experience of self-condemnation. Many sincere Christians carry a heavy, ongoing sense of guilt, replaying old sins, feeling they must somehow pay for their failures, never quite believing they are accepted. This is living as though the sentence were still in force, when God has declared it removed.

Distinguish God's voice from the accuser's. The Spirit convicts in order to lead us to repentance and then to freedom; the accuser condemns in order to keep us paralyzed in guilt (Revelation 12:10). Learning to tell the difference helps believers stop absorbing condemnation that God has already lifted.

Move toward resting in the verdict. The cure for self-condemnation is not to feel better but to believe God's word over our feelings. When the old guilt rises, the believer can answer it with the truth: there is now no condemnation for me, because I am in Christ. Invite students to name one accusing thought they carry and to practice answering it with this verdict this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Living in the verdict of no condemnation rather than under self-punishment
- Distinguishing the Spirit's conviction (toward freedom) from the accuser's condemnation
- Believing God's word over our feelings of guilt
- Resting in the finished verdict as the cure for self-condemnation

Discussion Prompts

- Do you live as someone under no condemnation, or do you still punish yourself?
- How can you tell the difference between conviction and condemnation?
- What accusing thought could you answer this week with the verdict of no condemnation?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul contrasts two ways of living: those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit; the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (vv. 5–8). What is the difference between these two mindsets, and why does Paul tie the direction of our minds so closely to life or death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul contrasts two ways of living, defined by where the mind is set: the flesh or the Spirit (vv. 5–8). The teacher should help students see that the direction of the mind is not a trivial matter but a matter of life and death.

Define the two mindsets. To set the mind on the flesh is to be governed by our fallen self-interest, appetites, and self-reliance, to live as though this world and the satisfaction of self were everything. To set the mind on the Spirit is to be governed by God, oriented toward His will, His values, and His presence. These are not just occasional thoughts but the habitual bent of the mind.

Explain why Paul ties this to life and death. The mind set on the flesh is death; the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (v. 6). The direction of our minds shapes the direction of our lives. A mind habitually fixed on the flesh leads steadily away from God and toward death; a mind fixed on the Spirit leads toward life and peace. We become what we dwell on.

Apply it practically. Paul will say elsewhere, set your minds on things above (Colossians 3:2), and think on what is true, honorable, and lovely (Philippians 4:8). The Christian life involves a deliberate, repeated reorienting of the mind toward God. The teacher can help students see that they are not helpless before their thoughts; with the Spirit's help, the mind can be retrained and reset toward the things of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Two mindsets, the flesh and the Spirit, as the habitual bent of the mind (8:5)
- The mind set on the flesh is death; on the Spirit, life and peace (8:6)
- We become what we habitually dwell on
- The deliberate reorienting of the mind toward God (Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:8)

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between a mind set on the flesh and a mind set on the Spirit?
- Why does Paul tie the direction of our minds so closely to life or death?
- How can the mind be deliberately reoriented toward the things of God?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul says the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace (vv. 6). Be honest about where your mind naturally drifts when it is at rest: to worry, to grievance, to appetite, to self, or to the things of God. What does the habitual direction of your thoughts reveal, and what is one practical way you could set your mind more on the things of the Spirit?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes Paul's teaching on the two mindsets and asks students to notice where their minds actually go. The teacher should help the class examine the habitual, default direction of their thoughts.

Explain why the resting mind reveals so much. When we are not occupied, our minds drift to whatever they are most set on: worry, grievance, appetite, self-image, planning, or God. This default drift is a truer gauge of the heart than our thoughts during a worship service. Inviting honest observation of where the mind wanders is illuminating.

Avoid both denial and despair. Some will be surprised or ashamed at where their minds go. The point is not condemnation but awareness; we cannot redirect what we have not noticed. A mind drifting habitually to worry or grievance is not beyond help; it is a mind that can, over time, be retrained.

Offer a concrete practice. Setting the mind on the Spirit is cultivated through deliberate habits: time in Scripture, prayer, gratitude, memorized truth to return to, the fellowship of God's people, and turning recurring worries into prayers. Invite students to choose one practical way to set their minds more on the things of the Spirit this week, especially aimed at their particular default drift.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The resting mind's default drift as a gauge of the heart
- Awareness as the first step toward reorienting the mind
- Hope that habitual thought patterns can be retrained by the Spirit
- Concrete disciplines for setting the mind on the things of the Spirit

Discussion Prompts

- Where does your mind naturally drift when it is at rest?
- What does the habitual direction of your thoughts reveal about your heart?
- What is one practical way you could set your mind more on the things of the Spirit?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says that if the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, and that by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body so that we will live (vv. 9–13). What does it

mean that the Spirit of God actually dwells in the believer, and how does putting sin to death by the Spirit differ from trying to defeat sin by our own willpower?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a remarkable claim: the Spirit of God dwells in the believer (v. 9), and by that same Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body so that we will live (v. 13). The teacher should help students grasp both the wonder of the indwelling Spirit and the way He empowers our fight against sin.

Marvel at the indwelling. The very Spirit of God, the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, lives inside the believer (v. 11). This is not a figure of speech but a reality of the new covenant. We are not left to face life and sin alone; God Himself dwells in His people, giving life now and the promise of resurrection life to come.

Connect indwelling to power over sin. In chapter 7 the problem was that the flesh, by its own willpower, could not defeat sin. Here is the answer: by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body (v. 13). The believer fights sin not with bare willpower but in dependence on the indwelling Spirit, who supplies the power the flesh lacked.

Clarify the difference from white-knuckle effort. Putting sin to death by the Spirit is still active, we do put to death, it is not passive, but the strength comes from the Spirit, not from ourselves. It involves cooperating with the Spirit: yielding to Him, drawing on His power in prayer, obeying His promptings, walking in step with Him (Galatians 5:25). The teacher should help students see that this is the resolution of chapter 7's struggle: not trying harder in the flesh, but mortifying sin in the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer (8:9–11)
- The Spirit as the same power that raised Jesus, at work in us
- Putting sin to death by the Spirit, not by willpower (8:13)
- Active cooperation with the Spirit, walking in step with Him (Galatians 5:25)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the Spirit of God actually dwells in the believer?
- How does putting sin to death by the Spirit differ from fighting in our own willpower?
- How is this the answer to the struggle of chapter 7?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul says all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, and that we have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit bearing witness that we are God's

children and heirs (vv. 14–17). Adoption means God has made you His own beloved child and heir. How does living as an adopted child of God, rather than as a servant trying to earn His approval, change the way you pray, obey, and face your failures?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question, while it carries rich doctrine, is placed to press the truth of adoption into the heart. Paul says all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God, that we have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry, Abba, Father, and that we are children and heirs of God (vv. 14–17). The teacher should help students feel the warmth and security of this.

Explain adoption. In the gospel, God does not merely acquit us as a judge; He adopts us as a Father, making us His own beloved children and heirs. Abba is the intimate, tender word a child uses for a dear father. The Spirit Himself assures our hearts that we truly belong to God. This is one of the highest privileges of the gospel.

Contrast the servant and the child. A servant works to earn his keep, anxious about his standing, motivated by fear of dismissal. A beloved child rests in secure belonging, motivated by love and trust. Many believers, though adopted, still relate to God as anxious servants. The truth of adoption invites them into the freedom and intimacy of sons and daughters.

Apply it to prayer, obedience, and failure. The adopted child prays with confidence to a Father who delights to hear, obeys out of love and trust rather than fear, and handles failure by running to the Father rather than hiding from a judge. Invite students to consider how relating to God as Abba, Father, rather than as a fearful servant, would change each of these. The aim is to move the class from servile fear to filial confidence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Adoption, God making believers His beloved children and heirs (8:14–17)
- The Spirit of adoption assuring us we belong to God (Abba, Father)
- The contrast between the anxious servant and the secure child
- Prayer, obedience, and failure transformed by filial confidence

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God has adopted you as His child and heir?
- How does relating to God as a beloved child rather than a fearful servant change your prayers?
- How would living as God's adopted child change the way you face your failures?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, and those He predestined He called, justified, and glorified (vv. 28–30). What comfort does it give to know that God is working all things toward good for His people and conforming them to the image of Christ, and what does this passage teach about God's loving purpose to save and shape a people for Himself?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul gives one of the most comforting promises in Scripture: for those who love God, all things work together for good (v. 28). The teacher should explain it carefully so students grasp both its comfort and its true meaning.

Clarify what the promise does and does not say. It does not say all things are good; many things are genuinely evil and painful. It says God works all things together for good for His people. Like a master weaver, God takes even the dark threads, the suffering, the loss, the failure, and weaves them into a good and purposeful design. The good He aims at is defined in the next verse: conformity to the image of His Son (v. 29). The ultimate good is not always comfort, but our being made like Christ.

Walk through the chain of verses 29 to 30. Paul traces God's saving purpose: those He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to Christ, and those He predestined He called, justified, and glorified. The teacher should present this as God's loving, settled commitment to bring His people all the way from His eternal purpose to final glory. The point is the security and certainty of God's saving purpose for those who love Him.

Handle the election language with a light but careful touch, since the next two lessons treat it fully. Note that the goal of predestination here is being conformed to the image of His Son, God's predetermined plan for the kind of people He is saving. Without diving into the Calvinist-Arminian debate yet, the teacher can say that God's purpose to save and shape a people for Himself is sure, that this purpose is realized in those who love God and are called according to His purpose, and that Lessons 10 and 11 will explore election more fully. Here the accent falls on comfort: God is for us and is working everything toward our good and our final glory.

Apply it to present hardship. This promise is meant for the hard days. When a believer cannot see how any good could come from a particular sorrow, this verse calls them to trust the Weaver even when they cannot see the pattern. The good is certain even when the means are painful, because the God who did not spare His own Son can be trusted with all the rest.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God working all things together for good for those who love Him (8:28)
- The good defined as conformity to the image of Christ (8:29)
- God's settled saving purpose from foreknowledge to glory (8:29–30)

- Election language handled lightly here, with fuller treatment in Lessons 10 and 11
- Trusting the Weaver when we cannot yet see the pattern

Discussion Prompts

- What does the promise that all things work together for good actually mean, and not mean?
- What is the good that God is ultimately working toward in His people?
- How does this passage give comfort in the middle of present suffering?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul says our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed, that creation groans awaiting redemption, and that the Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us when we do not know what to pray (vv. 18–27). When you are suffering or do not even know how to pray, how does it help to know the Spirit Himself is praying through you and that a coming glory outweighs all present pain? Where do you most need that comfort right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question draws on the section about suffering, groaning, hope, and the Spirit's intercession (vv. 18–27). The teacher should help students bring their own present pain and weakness to these comforts.

Set present suffering against coming glory. Paul says our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed (v. 18). This is not a denial of how heavy suffering is, but a matter of scale. The glory ahead is so vast that, weighed against it, even great present pain is light and momentary (2 Corinthians 4:17). This perspective does not erase pain, but it keeps it from having the last word.

Include the groaning. Paul says creation groans, and we groan too, awaiting the redemption of our bodies (vv. 22–23). The Christian life is lived in honest tension: real groaning and real hope together. The teacher should give students permission to grieve and ache, while anchoring them in the certain hope of redemption.

Comfort with the Spirit's intercession. Paul says the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us (vv. 26–27). When suffering leaves us unable even to find words, we are not cut off from God. The Spirit within us carries our wordless groans to the Father. This is an immense comfort for the weak and weary.

Make it personal. Invite students to name where they most need this comfort right now: a grief, a fear, a prayer they cannot put into words. The aim is for them to leave knowing they are not alone in their suffering, that the Spirit prays through them, and that a glory is coming that will make every present pain worth it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Present suffering outweighed by coming glory (8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17)
- The honest tension of groaning and hope together (8:22–23)
- The Spirit interceding for us in our weakness (8:26–27)
- The comfort of not being alone in suffering or in prayer

Discussion Prompts

- How does it help to weigh present suffering against the coming glory?
- What comfort is there in knowing the Spirit prays through you when you have no words?
- Where do you most need this comfort right now?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul closes with a triumphant assurance: If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son will graciously give us all things, and nothing in all creation, neither tribulation nor death nor things present nor things to come, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (vv. 31–39). What is the unshakable ground of the believer's security in this passage; how should this assurance fill us with confidence and comfort; and how do we hold this glorious promise together with the rest of Scripture, which warns that we must remain in Christ and can forfeit our salvation by abandoning faith, so that we neither despair of God's keeping love nor presume on a security that ignores the call to remain faithful?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, and the teacher should handle it so that students receive its full comfort while holding it together with the rest of Scripture. Paul ends the chapter with a triumphant declaration of the believer's security: If God is for us, who can be against us? He did not spare His own Son, so He will surely give us all things, and nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ (vv. 31–39).

First, let the assurance land fully. The teacher should not rush past the comfort to the qualification. Paul means every word. The God who gave His own Son for us is utterly for us. No accusation will stand, because God has justified us. No enemy can overpower the love that holds us. Paul lists the worst the universe can throw at a believer, tribulation, persecution, famine, danger, death, demonic powers, the present and the future, the heights and the depths, and declares that not one of them can separate us from God's love in Christ. This is meant to make believers unafraid. The teacher should let the class feel how secure they are in the love of God.

Second, identify the true ground of this security. Notice that the assurance rests entirely on God: on His being for us, His not sparing His Son, His justifying verdict, His unbreakable love. Our

security is not in our own strength or consistency but in the steadfast love of God in Christ. This is why it is unshakable, because it depends on Him.

Third, hold this together with the rest of Scripture, which the teacher must do carefully and without diminishing the comfort. This passage is sometimes used to teach once saved, always saved, the idea that a person, once saved, can never be lost no matter what. But Scripture clearly warns that a Christian can fall away by abandoning faith: do not let there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away (Hebrews 3:12–14); if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth (Hebrews 10:26–31); you have fallen away from grace (Galatians 5:4); the last state has become worse than the first (2 Peter 2:20–22). These warnings are real and must not be explained away.

Fourth, show how both truths fit together without contradiction. Read what Paul actually says: nothing outside us can separate us from God's love, no enemy, no circumstance, no power, no created thing. God will never stop loving us, never fail us, never let any external force tear us from His hand. That love is absolutely secure. What Paul does not say, and what the warning passages address, is the possibility of our own departure, our walking away by abandoning the faith. The two fit together like this: God's keeping love is utterly faithful and will never let go of us; our part is to remain in Christ by a persevering, obedient faith. So the believer is not to live in anxious fear that some trial or enemy might snatch them away (nothing can), nor in careless presumption that they may abandon Christ and still be safe (Scripture warns otherwise). The believer is to rest in the unbreakable love of God while remaining faithful to the end. The teacher should leave the class deeply assured and also soberly faithful, neither despairing of God's love nor presuming upon it.

Close on the love that holds us. The chapter ends not with a doctrine but with a Person and His love. The disciple being formed here is someone so convinced of God's love in Christ that they live without fear, and so grateful for it that they remain faithful to the One who will never let them go.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The believer's security grounded entirely in God, His love, His Son, His verdict (8:31–34)
- Nothing external in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ (8:35–39)
- The assurance as real and unshakable, meant to free us from fear
- This passage not teaching once saved, always saved (unconditional eternal security)
- Scripture's warnings that we can fall away by abandoning faith (Hebrews 3:12–14; 10:26–31; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20–22)
- Both truths held together, God's keeping love is faithful; our part is to remain in Christ by persevering faith
- Neither anxious fear nor careless presumption, but assured faithfulness

Discussion Prompts

- What is the unshakable ground of the believer's security in this passage?
- How does this assurance free us from fear in the face of suffering and danger?
- How do we hold this promise together with Scripture's warnings about falling away?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this magnificent chapter. Paul has shown you no condemnation, life and freedom in the Spirit, adoption as God's children, the certainty that God works all things for good, the help of the interceding Spirit, and a love from which nothing can separate you. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Romans 8:1-39 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question asks students to look back across this magnificent chapter and name how Jesus is forming them through it. The teacher should gather the threads, which run from no condemnation to inseparable love.

Recall the journey: no condemnation in Christ, life and power in the Spirit, putting sin to death, adoption as beloved children, the certainty that God works all things for good, the Spirit's help in suffering and prayer, and a love from which nothing can separate us.

Encourage a single takeaway. For one it may be finally laying down self-condemnation; for another, crying Abba, Father, instead of relating to God as a fearful servant; for another, trusting that God is weaving a present sorrow toward good; for another, resting, unafraid, in the inseparable love of God.

Close in worship and assurance. This chapter has lifted believers in prison cells and at deathbeds for centuries. The disciple being formed here is a person who lives free from condemnation and fear, secure as a beloved child, walking by the Spirit, and held fast by a love that will never let go, while remaining faithful to the One who holds them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- No condemnation, life in the Spirit, adoption, and assurance as the chapter's gifts
- Security in God's love joined to faithful perseverance
- Freedom from fear and self-condemnation as fruit of the chapter
- Spiritual formation grounded in the love of God in Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Which single truth from Romans 8:1-39 most needs to shape your week?
- Where do you most need to move from fear or self-condemnation into the freedom of this chapter?

- How does the inseparable love of God change the way you will face the week ahead?