

No condemnation in Christ

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[0 : 0 0] The Bible reading today is going to be from Romans 5, verse 12 to 21, and then Romans 8, 1 to 4. You can follow along in your bulletins if you like.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass.

For if many die through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin.

The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of that one man's trespass, death reigned through the one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

[1 : 1 5] Therefore, as one trespass led to the condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, grace might reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And moving to Romans 8, verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

[2 : 3 3] Well, this morning we are embarking on a magnificent part of God's Word. One commentator calls Romans chapter 8, it says it's like the tree of life in the middle of the Garden of Eden.

And as a church, we're going to spend the next five weeks savouring and being nourished by the fruit of this tree. This morning we've got just four verses, Romans chapter 8, verses 1 to 4.

Four verses, just 74 words in Greek, and yet the depth and breadth of Christian doctrine in these four verses is astounding. We find in these verses the justification of sinners, the unity of the three persons of the Godhead, the union with Christ, the sinfulness and helplessness of humanity, the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus' sinless life, the atonement, sanctification, and the liberating power of the Spirit, all in these four verses.

We could lose ourselves for hours, or days, or years, just in these four verses. Some of you start nervously edging towards the door.

No, but fortunately, the structure of these four verses is very simple. It's very simple. Verse 1, what has been eliminated. Verse 2, the reason.

[3 : 58] Verse 3, the reason for the reason. And verse 4, what has been facilitated. So there are two outcomes, verse 1 and verse 4. The first is stated negatively, something which was, which has now been removed.

And the second outcome in verse 4 is stated positively, something which was not, which has now been introduced. And then verses 2 and 3 give the explanation, the basis of those outcomes.

So that's where we're headed. We're on holy ground in these verses. So let's take off our sandals, tread reverently, and ask for God's help as we get into it. So let's pray again.

Heavenly Father, open our eyes that we might behold wonderful things in your word. Amen.

Well, let's start with verse 1, what has been eliminated. Now, I have a friend, and he shall remain unnamed, but this friend has been recently caught several times committing traffic offences.

[5 : 05] Twice he was caught using a mobile phone while driving and once going through a red light. And on top of the fines, there is, of course, the points that will be deducted from his licence.

And using a mobile phone while driving comes with a penalty of five points. We've done that twice. Going through a red light comes with a penalty of three points. And so if you do some quick maths, you'll work out that he is about to lose his licence.

He's got enough points deducted that his licence is going to be gone, but he hasn't yet been told that his licence is forfeit. The consequence is there. He knows it's coming.

It's hanging over him. And now he's just in this period of anxious waiting and driving as much as he can while he waits. But that's my friend.

I wonder if you have ever been in a relationship with someone where the person, the other person, and maybe it's a friend, maybe it's a colleague at work, maybe it's a parent or a spouse, the other person in this relationship, what you've done wrong is always hanging over that relationship.

[6 : 24] It's always hanging over you. It's an anxious relationship because you know that at any time they might just drop into the conversation another little reminder.

You know, you've failed. You hurt me. You let me down. You're not good enough. You know, sometimes I feel that way about my relationship with God, actually.

Sometimes I will wake up at 2am and just find my mind racing, my mind racing with accusations. And often they're accusations about failures on my part to love other people as I ought.

You know, my mind will suddenly be filled with people that I've let down, with deeds that are incomplete, with opportunities that I haven't sought or I haven't taken.

You know, I think of my nan, my grandnan, 102 years old, that I haven't seen for, I think, over a year. And that the list of people will continue, the people I've let down.

[7 : 43] And I'll accuse myself, Martin, you're a fraud. You've failed. You haven't done enough. You're not good enough. But what if the, what if the Minister for Transport wrote a letter to my friend saying that she'd reviewed his offences and decided that in his case they weren't going to deduct any points from his licence?

That anxious waiting that he's in at the moment, that would be replaced with overwhelming relief. And what if your friend or your relative who always brings up your failures, what if they came to you and said, you know, I've been doing some reading.

Actually, I've been reading the Gospels. And I've realised that none of us is perfect. And, you know, at times we're all going to hurt one another. And we're all going to let one another down.

And what's more, I've realised actually that I've been hurting you by holding this thing against you. And I want to apologise for that.

And I know it's made your life miserable. And I want to change. I don't want to bring that thing up anymore. I don't want to bring those things up anymore. They're forgotten.

[9 : 01] They're gone. I'll never mention them again. And you can hold me to that. How would you respond? I suspect you'd be speechless.

You'd probably be thinking to yourself, is this for real? You know, it seems too good to be true. But if that friend meant what they said and did what they said and did what they said, it would be a game changer in that relationship.

And what if God said to you, you know those things that you've been lying in bed worrying about, which you've done wrong?

I will never hold those against you. I mean, wow. It'd be like a spring of cool water water in a parched and weary desert.

I will never hold those things against you. Romans chapter 8, verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[10 : 24] Did you hear that? There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now, if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, you're not in Christ Jesus, you're not united to him, I hope you're hearing this and thinking, I want to become a Christian because I want that.

But if you are a Christian, you are linked to Jesus, you are united with him, you are in Christ Jesus, then this promise is for you. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

God is saying to you that your offences, your failures, the unrighteous things you've thought, said and done, all of those 2am accusations, they're gone.

I will never raise them with you again. I will never hold them against you. I won't even speak of them. I won't bring them up in conversation with you in order to knock you down.

[11 : 41] I won't bring them up as weapons in conversation with other people to humiliate you. I'll never give you the cold shoulder treatment because of what you've done.

You will not have to bear the consequences of your offences. It is done. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now we hear this and aren't we all a bit like the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them after he rose from the dead and the Gospel of Luke tells us at first they still did not believe because of joy and amazement.

Aren't we like that? I mean isn't this hard to really take hold of because of joy and amazement that God would say it is done. No condemnation.

And yet this is the Word of God to you. And what's more this is the conclusion that Paul has been building to the grand conclusion Paul has been building to through the whole epistle to the Romans.

[13 : 08] He spent chapters and chapters and chapters carefully making his argument because he wants us to know this is true. So let's go back to chapter one.

No, we won't do that. Now how is that, right? I get to step in this morning as the substitute teacher and you know, what do I get to teach about?

What's the lesson for the day? You know, maybe a bit of calculus. Would anyone like to do some calculus? Or a class on the oxidation of ferrous metals? No, I get to speak on the grand conclusion of the book of Romans.

A couple of weeks ago I was preaching at Mayfield Presbyterian and St Andrew's Presbyterian in town and you know what Tim Ravenhall, the minister there, you know what he gave me? Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39.

Right? And now Tim's a great guy but you know. But then Dave Bott, right? He says, yeah you can come and speak on Romans 8 verses 1 to 4.

[14:16] Actually I think Dave realised his mistake last week because he said to me last Sunday, are you sure you know you're going to be able to do this? I can do it for you if you like. Now when I say this is the grand conclusion of the book of Romans I might be overstating it a little bit but only a little bit, right?

Only slightly. Because the word therefore at the start of verse 1, it shows it's a conclusion but what it's picking up, what that therefore is picking up isn't so much what's just been said in chapter 7, it's rather the conclusion of the whole argument so far.

In fact if anything it especially points back to chapter 5. So there's a bunch of terminology here in chapter 8, key words that we find in chapter 5 and then repeat it in chapter 8.

For example, just to pick up 2, the word condemnation. There's only two other places in Romans where it occurs in chapter 5 verse 16 and chapter 5 verse 18 and the word righteous requirement in verse 4, again, only occurs four other times in Romans and previously it's there in 5 verse 16 and 5 verse 18.

Now without looking at chapter 5 in detail, you could almost read Romans chapter 5 as we did in the reading and then jump to Romans chapter 8 and feel like the argument just continues. It flows naturally from chapter 5 to chapter 8.

[15:37] So what Paul's doing in chapter 8, he's showing the conclusions, he's developing the conclusions he's begun to develop in chapter 5 but he's giving us the conclusions of the whole argument so far.

So what about chapters 6 and 7? Well in a sense chapters 6 and 7 have interrupted what Paul was doing. And he starts interrogating his conclusions with these questions because everything Paul has been saying about God's grace, everything Paul's been saying about the grace of God in saving sinners, it all just sounds too good to be true.

And so in chapters 6 and 7, Paul just interrogates the gospel of grace with questions. How can God's grace be the answer to sin? Doesn't it rather permit sin?

Now if the more our sins increase, the more God's grace increases, then shouldn't we just sin all the more? If we're not under the law, then doesn't that just mean we're just free to sin? And Paul, after all, what are you even saying about the law?

Are you saying that the law's sin? Paul interrogates the gospel of grace with these questions because it just seems too good to be true. But in chapter 8, having dealt with the objections, having answered the questions, Paul returns to where he left off in chapter 5 and he gives us his conclusion.

[16:57] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And then Paul gives us the reason for that conclusion.

The reason. Now in a sense, Paul doesn't really need to give the reason for that conclusion because he's already given it in the earlier chapters, but he repeats the reason here and he does it in a kind of unique form of words, a unique formulation and it's rich.

So let's listen to it together. What's the reason that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? Verse 2. For God has done what the... Sorry, that's verse 3.

Verse 2. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. What's the reason there's now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus?

It's because the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. That's the reason. Now, Paul says because one law has set you free from another law.

[18 : 08] Now, Paul here isn't speaking about the law of Moses, although usually when he uses the word law he is. In fact, in the very next verse, in verse 3, when he says law, he's talking about the law of Moses. But he isn't talking about the law here, although maybe he uses the word law because he kind of wants it there in the back of our mind by way of contrast.

But he's talking about two opposing powers. Two opposing powers. Two binding principles that operate in our world.

The power of the Spirit of life and the power of sin and death. Now, there's a law, there's a binding principle that operates in the part of North Lampton where I live, just across the road from the university.

The law is this. When there is summer rain and sun, there will be mosquitoes. When there's summer rain and sun, there will be mosquitoes.

It is an unfailing rule of our neighbourhood. Where there's one, there must be the other. A couple of years ago, the uni ran a grand challenge to address the mosquito problem and they awarded grants to, you know, the answers, the proposals that seemed the most innovative.

[19 : 22] But nothing humans do can ever overcome this law. You know, emptying out water collected in little vessels around the garden or, you know, the bottom of planters or whatever, that doesn't help.

It doesn't solve the problem. Putting up like mosquito zappers, that doesn't fix the problem. Putting on insect repellent, that doesn't fix the problem. Citronella candles aren't enough. Nothing we do is ever enough to escape the law of North Lampton.

It's a binding principle. There's also a law, a binding principle of the Shadwick House. The Shadwick House. It goes a bit like this. When the television is on, there will be children.

When the television is on, there will be children. Now, it is an unfailing rule. In fact, it's the most effective method of gathering children. Tidying up tends to send them scattered to the, scattering to the four winds.

Placing food on the dinner table is hit and miss. It has variable outcomes. But turn on the television and suddenly they're scurrying out of, you know, holes in the ground and cracks in the wall.

[20 : 34] When the television is on, there will be children. It is an unfailing rule. Likewise, there's a law, there's a binding principle of the Shadwick family Christmas. It goes like this.

When my brother Jake is present, there will be Diet Coke. When my brother Jake is present, there will be Diet Coke. It's another unfailing principle.

You'll never find one without the other. You see my brother and look nearby, you will find some Diet Coke. And he'll gladly share it with you. Because after all, it's an unfailing rule.

His supply is limitless. It's like the widow's jar of oil, which never runs dry. Like, when my brother Jake is present, there will be Diet Coke. Each of these is an unfailing rule.

Well, likewise, there is a law of sin and death. There's a law of sin and death. When there is sin, there will also be death. When there is sin, there will also be death.

[21 : 33] You know, I've used lighthearted examples, but we're not talking about something lighthearted now, are we? The universal reach of sin is confirmed by the universal reach of death.

Every wrinkle, every grey hair tells a story. Here is a sinner. We may mask it for a time, we may cover it up, but it'll catch up with us.

All die, because all have sinned. And there is no escape, as Paul says in Romans chapter 5, verse 17, ever since Adam, death has reigned.

It is an unfailing principle. Where there is sin, there will also be death. But God's word says here that in Christ Jesus, the law of sin and death has been overpowered by another law, by another binding principle, another unfailing principle.

Where there is the Spirit, there will be life. Where there is the Spirit, there will also be life. Like the river flowing out of the garden, the Spirit brings life wherever He goes.

[22 : 55] You cannot have the Spirit and not have life. Like the dove that returned to Noah's ark with a freshly plucked olive leaf, the coming of the Spirit always brings life.

We cannot, of course, draw the Spirit. We can't paint a picture of the Spirit. But if someone were to try to paint a picture of the Spirit, I imagine the canvas would be bursting with colour.

With verdant green, with flowers in bloom, with children laughing at play, because wherever the Spirit is, there is life.

And in Christ Jesus, this law, the law of the Spirit of life, shatters the other law, the law of sin and death. He liberates us from the old law.

He breaks its hold on us. So that the old law no longer applies. The rain and sun come, but the mosquitoes do not follow.

[24 : 02] We have sinned, but death has lost its power. How is it that in Christ Jesus, the power of this new law can liberate us from the power of the old law?

Well, verse 3 gives us the reason behind the reason. Verse 3. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. The first thing this verse says, and there's a lot this verse says, the first thing it says is that what, our liberation from the old law of sin and death, it could not be achieved by the law of Moses.

It could not be achieved by the law of Moses. The law of Moses could not bring freedom, rather it brought bondage. The law of Moses could not bring justification, rather it brought condemnation.

The law of Moses could not bring life, rather it brought death. The law of Moses could not bring freedom and justification and life because it was weakened by the flesh, Paul says.

[25 : 24] It was weakened by the fallen, sinful condition of humanity. The only way the law could bring freedom and justification and life would be if we, by our perfect obedience, made ourselves free, justified ourselves, made ourselves righteous.

The only way the law of Moses could bring life would be if we, by our perfect obedience, earned life. The law of Moses couldn't break us free from the law of sin and death.

The law of Moses itself was captive to the law of sin and death. And it strengthened the chains by which that law bound us. But what the law could not do, God has done.

God has done. Now, how much is packed into this verse in verse 3? But God has done it. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.

Let's break it down. God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh. See how carefully and reverently Paul describes the incarnation of the Son of God, the becoming man of our Lord and Saviour.

[27 : 04] God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, Paul says. He does not say, in the likeness of flesh, for that would imply that Jesus were not fully human.

And he does not say, in sinful flesh, for that would imply Jesus was sinful just as we are. Rather, he says, in the likeness of sinful flesh, fully human, yet himself without sin, God became man.

But God's sending of his son wasn't complete at the incarnation. God didn't just send his son to become a man. He sent his son for sin.

For sin. That is, that his son might be an offering for sin. A sin offering. A sacrifice for the sins of which we are guilty. The sins of the human race.

Indeed, the very sacrifice, the very offering that the law itself prescribed. And by doing this, God condemned sin in the flesh.

[28 : 14] Condemned sin in the flesh. Notice the repetition of that word there, condemned, in verse 3, like condemnation, in verse 1. The reason there is no condemnation, verse 1, for those who are in Christ Jesus, is because the condemnation has already fallen, verse 3.

The sins which were ours, the condemnation became his. The reason the law of the spirit of life liberates us from the law of sin and death is because in Christ Jesus, the law of sin and death has already been satisfied.

Its power is spent. It has no more claim. It has no more strength. Condemnation is eliminated.

You know, there are lots of things we as human beings, there are lots of things we as human beings can experience, which I myself will never experience. Doing a triple somersault into an Olympic pool is something I will never experience.

I'll never experience what it's like to hold a conversation in Swahili. I'll never walk on the moon. There are lots of things a human being can experience which I myself will never experience.

[29 : 41] At least not in this life. I can't so much speak for the life to come. I mean, maybe in the age to come, our resurrected bodies will be so glorious that we'll all be capable of amazing athletic feats.

Maybe in the age to come, Babel will be reversed and we'll understand all tongues. And maybe in the age to come, our dominion over the natural world will be perfected and brought to such new heights that we'll walk not just on the moon, but on Mars and on Saturn as well.

I don't know. But there is one thing I know I will never experience. Whether in this age or in the age to come, I will never be condemned for my sins.

I will never experience in full the retributive justice of God. I will never suffer the penalty of the law. You know, the fact that Melissa Wu is an Olympic diver and I am not doesn't really mean I'll never dive.

Maybe I will. The fact that Neil Armstrong was an astronaut and I'm not, that doesn't necessarily mean I won't walk on the moon. Maybe I will.

[31 : 03] Maybe I will. But the fact that the Son of God was condemned in my place, that means I will never, never, not now, not then, not ever, be condemned.

Condemnation is eliminated. Do you believe it? And not only has condemnation been eliminated, but righteousness has been facilitated.

Now, facilitated might not be the best word here, but I succumb to the preacher's temptation to have rhyming words. Not only has condemnation been eliminated, but righteousness has been facilitated.

Look at verse 4. Verse 4. God condemned sin in the flesh, in the person of his Son. Verse 4. In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Now, this is the second outcome of the reason and the second outcome of the reason for the reason, but it needs to be unpacked a bit, because there are some different ways we can take verse 4. And in fact, I've possibly multiple times changed my view on verse 4, so I want to give you a few options.

[32 : 26] I'll tell you what I think. What is the righteous requirement of the law that is fulfilled in us? Well, the law, again, once again, must be referring to the law of Moses.

And that word righteous requirement, that needs a little bit of reflection. The Greek word basically just means a righteous thing, right? In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it's often used of the statutes, in the plural, of the statutes found in the law of Moses.

The statutes is used the same word, and that's again and again in the Old Testament. Occasionally, it's used in the singular, when one individual statute or judgment is being focused on.

In Romans, in chapter 1, verse 32, feel free to look at it with me if you like, but I'll read it out. In chapter 1, verse 32, at the end of Paul, sort of outlining how God has handed us over to ever-increasing sin because of our refusal to acknowledge Him and worship Him.

Romans 1, verse 32, says, though they knew God's decree or God's righteous requirement that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

[33 : 39] Same word, God's decree, His righteous requirement, His judgment. So, possibly, and there in Romans, chapter 1, verse 32, what is it?

It's God's declaration that those who sin will die. So, possibly, that's what it's saying here in Romans 8, verse 4, that by condemning sin in the flesh, in Jesus Christ, God has satisfied that requirement of the law on our behalf, that sin leads to death, the law of sin and death, basically.

And certainly, that's true. I mean, that's the point I made just a little bit earlier in this talk. Yeah, it's certainly the case. And that used to be sort of how I took this verse, but I probably lean now towards one or the other, you know, taking it a different way.

There are other ways that that word, the righteous requirement, is used in Romans. Another way it's used is in Romans 5, verse 18, Romans 5, verse 18, where we read, Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification for all, and life for all men.

And there, the word that matches the one we're talking about, dikaioma, it is in Greek, is the word translated as act of righteousness. One act of righteousness.

[35 : 00] So there in Romans 5, verse 18, that word is used of Jesus' obedience, his righteousness. Adam's sin led to condemnation for all. Jesus' righteousness, his obedience, leads to justification for all.

Our sin was given to Jesus, his righteousness given to us. So it could be talking about that, and I think that's probably more likely than the first explanation I offered, that what this is saying, stating now positively, is that the righteous requirement of the law, the law's demand for righteousness, is satisfied because of Jesus' righteousness on our behalf, by his obedience.

Even though I think like either of those really does fit the context well, I'm still not convinced that's the primary sense of Romans 8, verse 4.

When Romans 8, verse 4 says that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, what is it talking about? Well, fulfilled there is in the passive, so it is what God does. It's something, it's the work of God in us.

Our righteous requirement is singular, but it's not talking about any one single statute of the law. I think it's talking about the law as a whole. The law's overarching, comprehensive requirement for righteousness.

[36 : 30] God's law demands righteousness. It's talking about the heart of the law, it's talking about its nature and purpose, to promote righteousness. And Romans 8, verse 4, isn't just saying that's fulfilled for us by Jesus, although it certainly is, but also that the purpose of God's condemnation of sin in the death of Christ was so that the righteous requirement of the Lord might be fulfilled in us, in us.

Now, that language of fulfilling the law comes up again in Romans, in only one other place in Romans. If you go to Romans chapter 13, you'll find it there. Have a look at this with me, Romans chapter 13. Romans chapter 13, verse 8.

Romans 13, verse 8. Oh, no one anything except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

The commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandment are summed up in this word, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

We see the same idea in Galatians chapter 5, verse 14. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. And both of those passages, of course, echo the teaching of Jesus Christ himself about the law.

[38 : 09] Now, if I'm right to link those passages with Romans 8, verse 4, then Romans 8, verse 4 isn't just saying that Jesus takes the penalty of the law for us, and it isn't just saying that Jesus' righteousness satisfies the demand of the law on our behalf, although those are true, it's also making the incredible claim that those who are in Christ Jesus fulfil the law.

Now, the New Testament never says believers are under the law of Moses. The New Testament never says believers are of the law of Moses.

The New Testament never says believers belong to the law of Moses. The New Testament never says believers have to do the law of Moses or obey the law of Moses. But it does say that when we live a life of love, we fulfil the law.

And God condemned sin in the flesh by sending His perfect sinless Son as an offering for sin, not only so that condemnation might be eliminated, but so that righteousness might be facilitated.

that love may be enacted in the lives of His people. Which is also, I must confess, too wonderful for me to fully comprehend.

[39 : 37] Now, when I toss and turn at 2am accusing myself of all my failings, there is a lot of truth in my accusations.

I am a sinner. I do deserve condemnation.

My love is insufficient. My deeds are incomplete. complete. But when I find myself in that headspace, I'm not only forgetting Romans 8 verse 1, I'm also forgetting Romans 8 verse 4.

I'm not only forgetting that condemnation is eliminated, I'm also forgetting that righteousness is facilitated. You know, it's an extraordinary thing, isn't it?

It's an extraordinary thing. You see, the obligation, this is what Romans 13 says, the obligation to love is never satisfied. It's never completed.

[40 : 47] You can never tick off the command to love your neighbour. It draws us ever on. And yet, even still, God can look on our incomplete and faltering efforts to love one another, and rather than condemn our failings, he can recognise the beauty of his own handiwork, producing righteousness.

He can say, by my Son and through my Spirit, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in you. Condemnation is eliminated.

Righteousness is facilitated. in Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death. Thanks be to God.

Amen. Amen.