

## Grace and Gratitude

**Romans 8:1-4, 7:21-24; Isaiah 6:1-5**

Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567)

**In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” <sup>4</sup>At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup>“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.**

### Isaiah 6:1-5

If you were to receive a vision of God upon His throne what would your reaction be? The prophet Isaiah in seeing the Lord seated high and exalted upon His throne and hearing the Seraphim call out to one another “Holy, holy is the Lord Almighty” knew beyond a doubt that he was unworthy to even

be in the presence of His Creator! While our finite minds are incapable of fully understanding God who is wholly other, when we consider what has been revealed to us by His Spirit concerning God such as His sovereignty, omniscience, power, holiness, righteousness, love, mercy, and justice; like Isaiah we can't help but see our own depravity! While we would like to



say that we “have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans chose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry;” the truth

is our attempts to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 4:3, 1:16) falls infinitely short of the Holiness of the One who has absolutely no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5-7)! Like Apostle Paul we know that “good itself does not dwell in us, that is in our sinful nature. For we have the desire to do what is good, but we cannot carry it out.” “In our inner being we delight in God’s law, but we see another law at work in us, waging war against the law of the mind and making us a prisoner of sin” (Romans 7:14-23). Since no one is righteous and all have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:9-18, 23) it can be quite frightening to approach a holy God with what Isaiah describes as “hearts that are unclean and righteous acts that are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6)! Since our meagre attempts at holiness often amount to nothing more than offering “unauthorized fire” unto God like Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus

10:1-3), or a lying in His presence like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), how could a God who is infinitely just respond to our sinful ways in any other manner than with the flames of His wrath that rightly extinguishes our very lives?

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*Like Apostle Paul we too cry out, "what a wretched man (person) I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death (7:24)?"*

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**Reflection:** Are you afraid to come before a holy God? Have you taken the time to truly see the infinite gap between your filthy rags and His holiness? Has your desire to not stand upon cheap grace in front of an all-powerful, all-seeing holy God resulted in you going days, weeks, or even months not praying to Him? Are you frustrated because you know what is right based on God's holy word and yet you are not able to obey His laws, especially the ones that relate to the sins you covet the most? Should one fear He who can cast both soul and body in hell so much that one cannot approach His throne that is one of grace?

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: The Reign of Grace](#), vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 789.

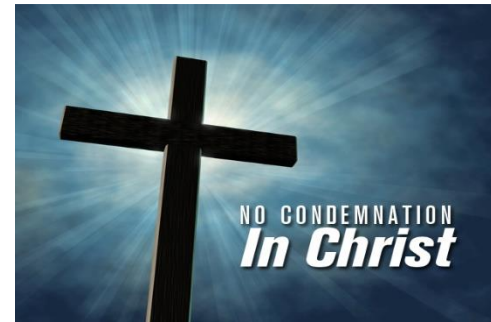
<sup>2</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

<sup>3</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 198.

## No Condemnation for Those in Christ

**“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1)**

Here Paul makes a statement in verse one that is not only the theme of Romans 8 but the entire Word of God!<sup>1</sup> Having inherited a sinful nature from Adam which made it impossible to stop sinning,<sup>2</sup> the best the law could do was to point out sin (3:20), aggravate sin (7:8-9), and condemn both



sin and the sinner (7:11).<sup>3</sup> As those who repeatedly turn their backs towards God in our unregenerate state we deserve the wages of our sin which is death (Romans 6:23).<sup>4</sup>

In response to his desperate cry, “who will save me from this body of death” (7:14), Paul boldly states we have entered a new era<sup>5</sup> marked by the glorious truth that through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus God has made a path of “righteousness apart from the law” (3:21-22)!<sup>6</sup> For those who have faith in the

<sup>4</sup> A.T. Robertson, [Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ro 8:1.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 472.

<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: The Reign of Grace](#), vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 790.

atoning sacrifice of Christ there is no condemnation past, present, or in the future!<sup>7</sup> “To be ‘in Christ’ means to live as someone freed from sin, death, self, and the law, and consequently from wrath.”<sup>8</sup>

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*Paul is not suggesting a saved person no longer sins which would contradict 1 John 1:8-10,<sup>9</sup> nor is he suggesting that God does not discipline His own, which would contradict Hebrews 12:4-11, but merely that by belief in Jesus the eternal punishment earned by sinful people has been paid by Jesus on the cross (Colossians 2:14).<sup>10</sup>*

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“Isn’t it true that the reason grace means little to most of us is that we do not consider ourselves to be great sinners, desperately in need of forgiveness?”<sup>11</sup> The truth is though we could never measure up to God’s holiness, we can approach His throne of grace with confidence (Hebrews 4:16), peace, and joy<sup>12</sup> because of the crucifixion of Christ who atoned for and paid the wages of our sin which is death!

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<sup>7</sup> David Seccombe, [Romans: Dust to Destiny](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2013), 134.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J., [Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 33, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 482.

<sup>9</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 198–199.

<sup>10</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 199.

**Reflection:** How often do you take time to consider the best you can the depths of the grace God has given you? Do you sometimes avoid praying to God because of a heinous sin you have committed? When is the last time you just knelt before God and said thank you for having sent Your Son Jesus to atone for my sins so that I might boldly come before You?

## The Law of the Spirit has Set me Free

**“because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (2)**

Paul answers his own cry, “who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death,” by boldly stating that there is no condemnation for those in Christ because the law of the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death! Here Paul contrasts two types of “nomos” (law) that a person can be governed by.<sup>13</sup> First, the “law of sin and death” is likely a reference to our feeble attempts to obey the Mosaic Law in the flesh.<sup>14</sup> Based on our own abilities we cannot break the power

<sup>11</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: The Reign of Grace](#), vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 790.

<sup>12</sup> David Seccombe, [Romans: Dust to Destiny](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2013), 134.

<sup>13</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

<sup>14</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

sin has over our lives.<sup>15</sup> God’s righteousness comes apart from the law (3:21; Galatians 2:15-3:14) through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, not through the law (4:12; Galatians 3:15-18).<sup>16</sup> The “righteousness” that God accepts brings us to the



second “nomos” by which a person can be governed, “the law of the Spirit.” Those of “second Temple Judaism bemoaned the fact that God’s presence, or Spirit, had departed

from Israel and longed for the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy of the return of God’s Spirit in the end times” (Joel 2:28-29).<sup>17</sup> When Paul says the nomos of the Spirit gives life, he does not mean a person is no longer condemned because the Spirit enables them to follow the Mosaic Law<sup>18</sup> but merely that through Christ the Spirit has written God’s laws upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-32)<sup>19</sup> and broken the

power sin had over our lives.<sup>20</sup> Not only are our breath and life on this earth entirely dependent on our Creator (Genesis 6:17; Psalms 104:29-30; Ezekiel 37:5) but also our eternal destiny!<sup>21</sup> Having been “freed from the old law of sin and death (7:7-24)<sup>22</sup> we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life in Christ not as sinless people but as those no longer condemned because the wages of our sin, death, was paid by our Lord, Savior, and King upon the cross!<sup>23</sup>

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*Praise be to God that believers though the power of the Spirit can not only “recognize” but “refuse” to give into sin<sup>24</sup> because we are “no longer live under its authority”<sup>25</sup> and having been sealed by His Spirit we can joyfully change our cry to “Abba, Father” thanks for adopting me as your very own child (8:15)!<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 44.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 474.

<sup>17</sup> C. Marvin Pate, [“Romans,”](#) in [The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary](#), ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 1080.

<sup>18</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 475.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 475.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 476.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Romans,”](#) in [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 221.

<sup>22</sup> A.T. Robertson, [Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ro 8:2.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 473.

<sup>24</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 200.

<sup>25</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 200.

<sup>26</sup> C. Marvin Pate, [“Romans,”](#) in [The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary](#), ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 1080.

**Reflection:** Ever feel like obeying all of God’s commands is beyond your abilities? And ever take the time to reflect on the infinite privilege it is to have the Spirit of truth teach and empower us to be holy as God is holy? Is not crying out Abba Father is a privilege beyond all measure?

## Set Free by the Offering of God’s Son

**“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of flesh to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in the flesh.” (3)**

We were freed from the law of sin and death not by our own effort<sup>27</sup> but through the “Spirit who can liberate the believer only because in Christ and the cross God has already condemned sin.”<sup>28</sup> While the Mosaic Law is good, for it contains the “true description of the will of God for

<sup>27</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 202.

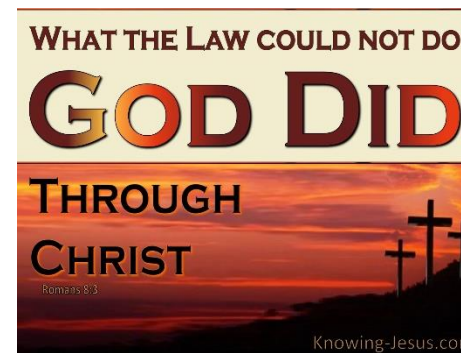
<sup>28</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 477.

<sup>29</sup> David Secombe, [Romans: Dust to Destiny](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2013), 135.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 478.

<sup>31</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 200–201.

humanity”<sup>29</sup> and is an excellent roadmap to holy living; it was “incapable of rescuing people from the dominion of sin and death (3:19; 3:28; 4:12–15; 7:7–25)<sup>30</sup> due to the “gravitational pull in human nature towards evil!”<sup>31</sup> God freed us from the



power of sin and death by providing His own Son Jesus to be the scapegoat of our atonement.<sup>32</sup> Paul tells us that God “entered decisively and historically”<sup>33</sup> by sending Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. Paul uses the

phrase “likeness of sinful flesh” not to suggest a false Docetic belief that Christ was not fully human<sup>34</sup> but to emphasize that as a real man Christ was able to feel as we feel, be tempted in every way as we are (Hebrews 4:15)<sup>35</sup> and yet “unlike every other person since Adam did not succumb to the tyranny of the flesh. He did not make Himself sin, nor did He inherit the

<sup>32</sup> Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Romans,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 221.

<sup>33</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 201.

<sup>34</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 202.

<sup>35</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Romans: The Reign of Grace](#), vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991–), 793–794.

penalty of sin, namely, death.”<sup>36</sup> Born of a woman and under the Law (Galatians 4:4) the sinless lamb of God met the “necessary requirements to act as our substitute”<sup>37</sup> The condemnation that we have rightly deserved by falling short of God’s glory through sinning “has been poured out on Christ, our sin-bearer.”<sup>38</sup>

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*Christ took the wrath of God upon Himself and in doing so not only did He atone but also broke the power of sin over our lives.<sup>39</sup> This does not mean believers are no longer tempted or give into sin but that through the power of the Holy Spirit they can choose to stop sinning!*

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Apart from Christ our attempts at holiness are nothing more than a “tailspin of futility”<sup>40</sup> but “in Christ” there is no condemnation for He once and for all fully paid our debt!

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<sup>36</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Romans](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 249.

<sup>37</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 479.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 481.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 480–481.

**Reflection:** Imagine the wrath of God owed to yourself due to all the times you fell short of His glory! How grateful are you for Christ dying in your place on the cross? Do you thank Him every day for the freedom from sin and death He purchased for you at the expense of His very life?

## The Requirements of the Law met in Us

**“in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (4)**

The sin barrier between humanity and a sinless God is not removed by our obedience, “for all far short of the perfect obedience of the law,”<sup>41</sup> but in Christ “His righteousness is transferred to us”<sup>42</sup> so that the law might be fully met in us. “One does not have to keep the law to be saved but one must be saved to keep the law.”<sup>43</sup> Augustine was right to say, “the law is given that grace might be sought; grace is given that the

<sup>40</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 201.

<sup>41</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 483.

<sup>42</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 483.

<sup>43</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 203.

law might be fulfilled”<sup>44</sup> through the Holy Spirit who lives inside of the believer! For those born-again God’s laws are not only written upon their hearts<sup>45</sup> but they can also obey them because through the atonement of Christ the power of sin has been broken. “The propensity to sin” still exists but because the Spirit lives inside believers there has been “planted within



them a new way of thinking (8:5-7) and a new way of living.”<sup>46</sup> The “Spirit reveals Christ to us and establishes our faith in Him” so that we might have our minds set on what the Spirit desires

for our lives, instead of what our flesh covets.<sup>47</sup> While Christian holiness and justification before a holy God “is not a matter of painstaking conformity to the specific precepts of the external Mosaic law-code,” when it comes to sanctification believers are expected to obey the intent of the law by the Holy Spirit who produces fruit in their lives.<sup>48</sup> Those who live by the Spirit can acknowledge and “conform to the law’s

fundamental intent,”<sup>49</sup> every jot and tittle given (Matthew 5:18).

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*While walking in the Spirit means to live under grace,<sup>50</sup> let us never treat it like what Tozer calls “cheap grace” where we live as if our salvation, which was purchased at the expense of Christ’s very life, is a license to sin! We have been set free from the law of sin and death so why choose to continue to be enslaved by it!*

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**Reflection:** Considering the price Christ paid to secure your freedom from the law of sin and death are you truly trying to walk in step with the Holy Spirit? When you sin are you willing to ask for forgiveness and then with the Holy Spirit’s help walk in God ways? Is it a burden to deny yourself, take up your cross of follow Jesus or a privilege to be cherished and acted upon?

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<sup>44</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [The Epistle to the Romans](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 482.

<sup>45</sup> David Secombe, [Romans: Dust to Destiny](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2013), 136.

<sup>46</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 46.

<sup>47</sup> David Secombe, [Romans: Dust to Destiny](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2013), 137.

<sup>48</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Romans: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 6, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 163–164.

<sup>49</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 203.

<sup>50</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Romans: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 6, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 163.

## Conclusion

If you were to have a vision of God upon His throne what would your reaction be? Would we be like Isaiah and in comparing God's sovereignty, omniscience, power, holiness, righteousness, love, and mercy to our filthy rags of debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, and detestable idolatry cry out, "I am ruined! For I am a person of unclean lips?" While no one is righteous, not a single person, this does not mean that there is no way to approach a holy God! Yes, our hearts filled with unclean thoughts and our acts are nothing more than filthy rags but for those who are in Christ they can boldly approach God's throne of grace because the Son atoned for one's sins at the expense of His very life! Like Apostle Paul there is a struggle inside of each and everyone of us for while we delight in God's law, we cannot obey it has been weakened by our sinful nature. Praise be that righteousness comes not from strict obedience to the law but faith in a risen Savior! Upon conversion God gives us the gift of His very own Spirit who not only writes God's laws upon our hearts but also enables His own to walk in step with the Holy Spirit. Those born again still have the propensity to sin but are no longer receive the wages of sin for Christ has paid that debt in full. So, don't afraid to come to the fountain of living waters, to bask in the presence of one's Creator for while you are no righteous based on your own flawed merits you can be assured you will not be condemned but treated as the heir and child of God that you are! Come as you are sinners saved by grace through faith not out of a sense of entitlement but joy and gratitude that God saved wretch like you with unspeakable love clearly demonstrated upon the cross that set you free from sin and death!