

No Condemnation

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[0 : 00] If you have a Bible, and I'm going to need mine because I walked up here without it.

I got excited about God's reign and forgot my Bible. If you have a Bible, open up to the book of Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8. We are finally returning back to the book of Romans after having taken a couple of months off.

And now we are arriving at what may be the greatest chapter in all of the Bible. I said some months back as I preached in Romans chapter 3 that there was a paragraph in the middle of Romans chapter 3, really towards the end, that I felt like was the most crucial paragraph in all of the book of Romans.

And I maintain that. But I think that this might be, in terms of chapters, the greatest chapter in Romans and maybe the greatest chapter in the Bible, if we are permitted to rank matters of God's Word.

And I'm not sure that we are. But in my heart, this feels like a tremendous, tremendous chapter that we're beginning this morning. And we're just this morning going to read the first four verses and really zone in on verse 1.

[1 : 15] And so I want to ask you guys to stand with me in honor of God's Word as we read the opening verses of Romans chapter 8. The Apostle Paul writes, 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. 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.

We thank You, Father, that Your Spirit inspired Paul to write these words. And we pray that that same Spirit would give us insight now. An insight that goes beyond just learning, but that an insight that will change our hearts and our patterns of thinking.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. You know, being a missionary is oftentimes, if not all the time, a lot like being a soldier going into the battlefield.

[2 : 33] It really is. You don't enter in as a missionary. You don't go into the battlefield with guns and grenades. But you do enter in with the Word of God, which Paul calls the sword of the Spirit. You don't see actual flesh and blood enemies before you, but you fight a spiritual enemy that surrounds you, who, though at times will make use of flesh and blood through other people to persecute those who come to preach the Gospel, those who come to proclaim God's Word.

And the truth of the matter is, is that in a sense, we are, all of us, missionaries. I know we tend to think of those who go off to foreign lands as missionaries, or we tend to think of those who go to places where we can't pronounce the names really and live in squalid conditions.

We think of them as missionaries. But in a very real sense, we have all been entrusted with the task of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. And we are living at the ends of the earth.

I think for the Apostle Paul, as he thought about what it meant for him to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth, he moved to the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire, and now we're even further out than the Apostle Paul ever dreamed of reaching himself.

So we are actively engaged right here in Atascosita. We are engaged in missionary work. And it's good for us to return back to Romans, because Romans is a missionary letter.

[3 : 55] Romans is a letter written by a missionary for the furtherance of missions, for the furtherance of the preaching of the Gospel. In fact, Paul wrote this book to the people in Rome because he hadn't met most of them.

He hadn't yet been to Rome to meet the church there. He hadn't spent time with the Roman Christians. The only ones that he knew were ones that he had met in other cities scattered throughout the Empire.

And so Paul wrote this book so that they could become acquainted with him, so that they could get to know him and know what his Gospel was that he was proclaiming all over the Empire. with the purpose of gaining their support, so that he could go beyond Rome into the regions of Spain and other parts of Europe to preach the Gospel in places, according to Paul, where Christ has not yet been named.

So this letter was written by a missionary with the hopes of gaining support for further mission work in places beyond even the city of Rome to which he wrote.

And so this letter drips with Gospel truth. If you want to rejoice in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if you want your spirit to be uplifted and renewed by pondering the greatness of what Jesus has done, there's no better way to do that than the book of Romans.

[5 : 14] And there are scarcely any verses in the book of Romans that would further us in rejoicing in the work of Jesus than Romans chapter 8 verse 1.

This chapter is loaded with powerful sentences. But it starts out with what may be the most powerful sentence in the whole chapter and maybe in all of Romans. Take a look at verse 1 again with me.

Apostle Paul tells us, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now, Paul says, there is no condemnation, which means that at some point in time, there was condemnation. At some point in time, both Paul and his original readers and we ourselves stood condemned before God.

But now, for those who are in Christ, that sentence has been reversed. But at one time, we stood condemned. We stood deserving of God's punishment, God's judgment, and indeed God's wrath itself.

[6 : 24] There was a time, before the now of no condemnation in Romans 8 verse 1, there was a time when all of us deserved to be condemned. We all deserved God's wrath.

To which I think a lot of people would respond, But why? On what grounds would God condemn me as deserving of wrath? And there are two answers that you can give for that that go hand in hand from the book of Romans.

You can turn back just three chapters to chapter 5. I encourage you to do that. In Romans chapter 5, Paul tells us, as he speaks to our connection with the first man, the first human being, Adam, and he says that there's a connection between all of Adam's descendants and Adam himself.

And Paul says that because of what Adam did, we experience condemnation. So, in Romans chapter 5 verse 16, if you jump in the middle of verse 16, we read this, For the judgment following one trespass, that's Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit, the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation.

Condemnation. There's that same word that we find there in Romans chapter 8 verse 1. So condemnation comes because we were in Adam, because Adam represented all of his descendants.

[7 : 44] You can move down just a few more verses to verse 18. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for whom? For all men, and that doesn't just mean males, it means all people, all the descendants of Adam.

One transgression of Adam in the Garden of Eden resulted in condemnation for everyone. So that on one level, if we ask why at one time were we deserving of condemnation, the answer would be simply because we are descendants of Adam.

Simply because we in Adam somehow mysteriously were a part of his sin and his fall. His fall was our fall.

But even beyond that, we can answer more fully that it's not only because of Adam's sin, but it's because of our own sins and our own failure to live up to God's standards of righteousness that we find ourselves in the position of deserving his wrath.

Turn back to Romans chapter 1, where in verse 18 we read, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

[8 : 54] And then if you move down to the end of that chapter, verse 32, Though they, they being the same, all men, that is all people, in verse 18, Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

So we are sinners and at times we approve of sin in other people's life and we know innately, even if on the surface we deny it, we know that we rightly deserve the wrath of God.

That is death and eternal condemnation. Now I think though that a lot of people as they hear that, we as Christians, we kind of nod along and say, right, right, right, that was once true of me.

But I think a lot of people as they hear that will think, well I don't, I mean that seems a bit harsh, that seems a bit of a stretch. I mean sure I'm no angel, I've done some things that I ought not to have done, I've told a few lies in my life, I've mistreated some people, I've said some harsh words, some people might even say, yeah, I mean I've stolen a few things but I've never really done anything terrible and horrible.

I'm not sure that what I have done actually is deserving of the wrath of God. Surely the Apostle Paul here is thinking of those who've really gone off the rails.

[10 : 15] Surely he's thinking of those who are really bad, really evil, murderers, rapists, serial killers, I mean the really bad, surely that's the unrighteousness and ungodliness of verse 18.

Well, we might say that if it weren't for verse 29 where we get a list of unrighteousness. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, they're full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Oh, some of the really big sins are listed there but alongside those really big sins are things like gossip and envy and covetousness and disobedience to parents.

these are not necessarily the banner things that are going to get you on the news, right? Nobody ever sees a news report about an eight-year-old disobeying his mom when she told him to clean up their room.

[11 : 18] You just don't get a news report about that. Nobody writes an article in the newspaper simply because you've slandered your neighbor. Nobody does that and yet those things fit under the category of the types of unrighteousness that brings God's wrath upon us.

And we ask why and the answer becomes clear as we think more clearly about what sin is. Because sin is not merely a minor offense against another human being.

Oh, no. Sin is a refusal to give to God the glory and honor that is rightfully His. You know, abortion has been all over the news in these last couple of weeks.

It's been all over the news. And many of us as we've watched those videos have sort of stood almost aghast at the casualness with which many people discuss the killing of little children.

And we think, how can someone be that callous? How can someone be complicit in that? And there have been many, and I think rightly, comparisons to Nazi Germany where so many Germans live their normal, ordinary lives while just outside the city there were concentration camps.

[12 : 37] And they tried not to think about the realities of what happened inside the gas chambers. They just simply tried to live their lives and thought of that as a necessary evil taking place.

But we won't contemplate the actual evil happening in there. And that's what's happening among us. That's real and that's true. That's what's happening with us in the abortion industry. But sometimes when the doors are flung open and the citizens are allowed to go in and see the bodies and the gas chambers and all the horror around, that's when we stand aghast and say, you evil, wicked person, you.

And yet, if sin is not merely a great offense against another human being, but if sin is an offense against a holy God, then every sin that we commit is evil beyond our imaginations and deserving of the punishment that God meets out.

And I fit in so many of these categories that it's almost depressing. I don't know that there's long periods of time that ever go by that I don't catch myself caught up in the midst of covetousness.

That I don't see something, some new gadget or something that a neighbor down the street has and I don't begin to think, well, if I had that, if I had that, I could do this. If I only could get my hands on that thing, I could do that.

[14 : 00] Covetousness is not merely a problem for children and toys. Covetousness is a problem for all of us, right? And there's hardly a week that goes by that I don't engage in some form of envy or perhaps some form of deceit or am tempted to participate in some kind of gossip.

These things are true about all of us. They are real. They are there. And they are not minor. They are not to be dismissed.

When we think about the concentration camps or when we think about abortion clinics and we are horrified to see human life treated in such a way, how often do we stop to pause and ask the question, but why is that life of such worth and value?

Why do we deem the devaluing of that life to be such a great and heinous evil? Well, the answer that we will get from Scripture is that because human beings are created in the image of God and a slap in the face of that which is in the image of God is a slap in the face of the one in whose image they are created.

The very command not to murder after the flood was given because God told Noah, in my image man was created. So whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

[15 : 19] In other words, I deem it to be a great evil to kill a man, to kill a human being because that man, that woman, and that child are made in my image and you assault me when you assault them.

And then when we take a stand back and we say, it's not merely murder that's an assault against God, but it is all of our sins. We begin to understand why the verdict has come for all of us.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

And suddenly, as we begin to see the reality of sin, the verdict seems not odd, not over the top, not strange, but perfectly fitting for the crime committed.

But the glory of Romans 8, verse 1 is that now in Christ there is no condemnation anymore. No more condemnation for all those who are in Christ Jesus.

[16 : 23] So at one time, the verdict for all of humanity is condemnation. But there can be, for those who are in Christ, there can be a new verdict of no condemnation.

But the question becomes, how does that happen? How does a person move from being fully deserving of God's wrath and anger and judgment to being freed from wrath and anger and judgment?

Paul answers that question just a few verses down as he gives us insight into how the verdict of no condemnation comes about. Take a look down in verse 3 where it says that God has done what the law, because it was weakened by the flesh, we'll talk about that next week, God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do, and he did it by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.

He condemned sin in the flesh. There it is. There's that word again. God condemned sin in the flesh. In whose flesh?

In the flesh of Christ who came in the likeness of sinful flesh. In other words, Jesus came fully human and fully man. He did come in flesh, but he did not come in sinful flesh.

[17 : 35] He did not come as a descendant of Adam. He came as a second Adam so that Christ entered into a fallen world with an unfallen human nature so that he might take upon himself all the judgment deserved by a fallen world.

We can move from being condemned to not condemned if we are in Christ because Christ has taken upon himself our condemnation. God condemned sin in the flesh of Jesus.

In fact, if you move down to verse 34 as you draw near the end of chapter 8, we come back to this theme, verse 34. Who is to condemn? In other words, who might condemn those who are in Christ? The answer is nobody.

Why? Because Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who's at the right hand of God, and who indeed is interceding for us. Christ is the one who died.

It was his flesh that bore the penalty for our sins. For every lie that every believer in Christ has told, Christ endured the punishment due for that sin.

[18 : 52] For every time that you have slipped into gossip, if you are in Christ, Christ has borne the penalty of that sin. But not only for those, but for the most heinous sins that we can think of.

So that for every woman who has ever terminated the life of her baby, if she is in Christ, there is no condemnation for that. For every abortion provider who has participated in the deaths of thousands of those made in the image of God, there can be no condemnation if they are in Christ Jesus.

And there is a sense, I think, for some of us where we think, but that's not just. I can imagine if I were living in Nazi Germany as a Jewish person or as one of the Christians who were persecuted for standing with the Jews, I can imagine if at the end of the war and I survived and I saw that many of those who participated in that, many of those soldiers escaped, many of those leaders escaped into South America and other places, I would probably comfort myself by saying, well, they may escape judgment at the hands of the allies, but they can't get away from God's hands and then to perhaps hear a report that this person, this man who oversaw perhaps the death of your children or your uncle or your cousins or your whole family had trusted in Jesus.

And now, not only does he escape the judgment of the allies, he's escaped the judgment of God. And perhaps you might think, there is no justice, it's not happening, and then, and then you recall, justice has been meted out because Christ died for murderers.

Christ took the penalty upon himself for people who slay the innocent. And as Jesus hung upon the cross, he was not merely some passive recipient, he was actively taking upon himself the wrath due for the worst of people who would someday trust in him.

[20 : 54] This is the Redeemer. We casually talk about the death of Jesus so often. We casually think about it. But the depths of suffering that he endured to make redemption possible for even the worst of sinners, this is not a lighthearted gospel.

This is not a gospel that we ought to take for granted. This is not something that we lightheartedly proceed to throw out there to the world and say, take it or receive it, do what you want with it. This is good news that was costly.

Christ Jesus died and in his flesh he took real condemnation and wrath upon himself. The infinite fury of an infinitely powerful father poured out upon his son so that we might receive the verdict of no condemnation.

you cannot you cannot fathom love that stretches to those lengths.

You cannot do it. It's not possible. Which means that whatever you have done whatever lies you have told whatever people you have hurt whatever mistakes you have made as a parent however many ways you have failed in your marriage present marriage or maybe a past marriage that continues to haunt you that the enemy would want to continually bring up in your face every time you feel or sense a call to do something for the Lord and the enemy would throw you can't do that because of this.

[22 : 30] You ought to hear the verdict of no condemnation for those who are in Christ. There may be temporary earthly consequences for our sins but there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that is a word that we need to cling to. That is a word that we need to be passionate about spreading to others around us.

When I was a teenager I used to watch a show every Wednesday night 9 o'clock I had a television it was a small little TV in my bedroom. I don't let my kids have TVs in their bedrooms but back then you only got like three channels on it and it was actually deeper than it was wide but I had this little TV in my bedroom every Wednesday night on NBC at 9 o'clock I would watch a show called Quantum Leap.

Most of you probably never heard of that show and some of you are thinking great another terrible sci-fi reference and I confess it and I'm sorry for it but I used to watch this show and you're probably not familiar with it it was about a guy named Sam and he could travel in time and he would go back in time and the tagline of the show was his job was to put right what once went wrong and so he would go back in time but there was sort of a catch to it because the only way he traveled back in time was to go into other people's bodies sort of his mind and their bodies sort of like a time travel freaky Friday kind of thing alright and so he would find himself suddenly he would be in a situation and he wouldn't even know who he was or anything and he would have to look in a mirror to see who he was because he didn't know and it could be at any time during his own lifetime it was never in the future always in the past and he couldn't control as soon as he fixed one problem for the next episode suddenly he appeared somewhere else at some other point in time in the middle of somebody else's life but the reason that he was able week after week not only because of writers that wrote it into the show but the reason that he was able to actually fix the problems that once went wrong is because he had knowledge of the future because he had a friend who could appear to him in the form of a hologram and give him information and I'm telling you it's silly sci-fi stuff

I warned you but he had information about the future and so he could affect the change he could affect the course of historical events and whether he was trying to save somebody's life or save a marriage that had ended in divorce or whatever it was all kinds of things sometimes it was big huge things sometimes it was little things he was trying to fix in people's lives he was just trying to fix things and he could do it because he had knowledge of the future he knew what the problem was he knew what had gone wrong in people's lives and therefore he knew what he needed to fix and we know what we need to fix in people's lives we know the future of people who are outside of Christ it is condemnation it is wrath it is hell it is everlasting and it is beyond our comprehension to think about how bad it will be but we know it we know when we see the cashier at the grocery store that if she is not in Christ her future is grim we know when we have a conversation with our neighbor about the color of our grass versus the color of their grass that if they are not in Christ their future is dark indeed we know what the future holds for so many people around us and what's more we know how to fix it we know the remedy we have it we know how to get them from condemned to not condemned they must simply be in Christ they must trust in Jesus so that their sins become his sins and his righteousness becomes their righteousness so that they might be set free from the judgment that they deserve we know how to fix the problems of the world we know how to fix the problems of our neighbors and our co-workers they must be in Christ and if we would faithfully remember to meditate on the gospel for yourself every morning so that you don't begin to feel condemned when you're not condemned throughout the day and for others so that you might possess the boldness to turn a casual friendship into a friendship that allows for deeper conversations so that if not on that day then somewhere down the road there might be an opening for the gospel if we might only think about the gospel every morning for the sake of our own service to the Lord and feeling not condemned and for the sake of encouraging us and reminding us and emboldening us to share the gospel the world would be

[27 : 28] I believe begin to be transformed around us because our enemy is not cultural decay our war is not a culture war those are merely symptoms of a far deeper and far greater problem and we know the solution there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ so rejoice in that and proclaim it every opportunity that you get let's pray let's pray