

No Condemnation

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[0 : 00] If I was condemned, and that's going to be an important word tonight, we'll see that.

But if I was condemned to spend the rest of my life on a totally deserted island with no human contact, whatever, If I had with me only one book, it would be the Holy Bible.

If I could have only one book of the 66 books that make up the Holy Bible, I would myself choose the book of Romans.

If I could have on that deserted island only one chapter of the Holy Bible, I would pick Romans chapter 8.

If I could have only one verse of the Holy Bible, I would choose Romans chapter 8 verse 1. Suffice it to say that tonight we're going to be looking at Romans chapter 8 verse 1.

[1 : 07] Every believer should know this entire chapter down to the minutest detail.

In this chapter we find both godly encouragement and godly comfort. This chapter is the blueprint for Christian living, Christian loving, Christian worship, and Christian service.

In fact, Romans chapter 8 is sometimes called the diamond of grace in the Word of God. Well, what's so special about this chapter?

As we close our study of pursuing holiness in an unholy world over the next few weeks, I will be telling you exactly what is so special about this chapter.

We're going to begin that tonight. Ironically, as late as last Thursday, I was kind of wringing my hands unsure of what I was going to teach on tonight.

[2 : 22] I'd kind of exhausted everything. And that left in doubt how I was going to fill in the next six Monday nights that we have to complete our study and the Lord gift wrapped Romans chapter 8 to me and now I'm unsure if I have enough time to fit it all in.

You know, it's either feast or famine. So why is the eighth chapter of Romans so important to our Christian walk? The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is sometimes referred to as the silent member of the Godhead.

I don't think that's very fair or very accurate. The truth is the Holy Spirit is the author of the entire Bible from Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1 to just before maps in the back of your Bible when you finish Revelation.

But it is in Romans chapter 8 where we find the details of the work of the Holy Spirit for the redeemed people of God.

In this chapter, He is anything but silent. Now, we have to face up to some facts here. As Baptist people, sometimes we might have problems when we start speaking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 52] And I can assure you the fault is not with the Spirit of God. I think the problem has to do with the false teachers and the frauds of the extreme charismatic movement and particularly the certain televangelists that are trying to make a buck by claiming certain manifestations of the Spirit that He and the other two members of the Godhead had nothing to do with.

The truth is, not everything that is claimed to be from the Holy Spirit is from the Holy Spirit. The actions of these wolves in sheep's clothing have scared some of us off as it relates to the Holy Spirit.

Well, don't allow that to happen in your life. Instead, let your belief in the ministry of the Holy Spirit be regulated and guided by the Scriptures.

He is everywhere in Scripture. The Spirit shows up in the opening words of the Bible in Genesis chapter 1. We read this in verse 2.

The Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. The Spirit is present and speaking in the closing words of the book of Revelation chapter 22.

[5 : 22] The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, even tonight. So this leaves us with a question.

Why do I single out Romans chapter 8 as the high watermark in His dealings with the true children of God? I do so because it is here more than any other chapter of the 1,189 chapters that make up the Bible where we see the working of the Holy Spirit for the redeemed people of God.

And who are the redeemed people of God? They're the ones who belong to the Father, having been purchased by the Son, and now they live their lives empowered by the Spirit.

That empowerment is detailed to us in Romans chapter 8. As such is a treasure trove of truth and blessing, not only for our time on earth, but for all eternity.

Now, did you get that thought down? What we learn and experience in Romans chapter 8, we take with us into eternity.

[6 : 48] And as I look around this room, I see a wealth of information about God the Father. Additionally, we have all heard much over the years, as we should, about Christ the Son.

And now we're going to focus on God the Holy Spirit. It is not complicated. The Holy Spirit engages in two great works on behalf of the saved of God.

The Spirit works to sanctify true believers and to bring true believers to glory. The Father made great plans for His children.

The Son made great provision for the children of God. It is the Holy Spirit that produces these in God's children.

When we get a firm grasp on what the Holy Spirit is up to in our lives, it results in an increase in our love of the Spirit and our worship for the Spirit as a co-equal and co-eternal member of the Trinity.

[8 : 04] When this is done correctly, and of course by that I mean scripturally, there will be results. The biggest result will be an increase in the knowledge of just how immense, and I probably should have put in that word there, infinite, is the knowledge and kindness of God through Christ by the Holy Spirit.

As Paul says in Ephesians, He has granted us all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. There is another benefit that we will receive by God's grace as we close out our study on pursuing holiness.

We will be protected from the dishonorable and even bizarre things that are heaped on the Holy Spirit by the false teachers I alluded to earlier.

Many of the things that are done in the name and supposed power of the Holy Spirit in our day are nothing less than taking His name in vain. That's the only conclusion you can come to.

And of course that's only my opinion, but I'm right. Beyond protecting us, He will produce within us love, joy, peace, gratitude, and worship, whether that is in church or in private.

[9 : 34] It is acceptable worship. The work of the Holy Spirit is secured for every believer by grace. But I have to admit that the path to Romans 8.1 has been a painful one.

Consider our journey through earlier passages in the book of Romans. Remember these words were inspired by the Holy Spirit and penned by a Christian man named Paul, whom we would consider to be the greatest Christian ever.

He wrote this down by inspiration, For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing I do not understand.

For I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the law, confessing that the law is good.

So now no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh.

[10 : 52] For the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want I do not do. But I practice the very evil that I do not want.

But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from this body of death. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

So then on the one hand, I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh, the law of sin. Any believer would have to be dead in both head and heart to not really feel the agony that the apostle Paul expresses in these words.

[12:18] Paul's at war with himself. It is so intense, he feels as though someone has strapped a dead corpse to his body. He wants to be rid of it, but he's trapped in unredeemed flesh.

And brothers, that battle is not unique to Paul. All believers experience this. I have felt such agony many times over the past 44 years of my life.

It is caused by the sinfulness of fallen flesh. God even says if we ever declare that we're without such sin, we're calling him a liar because he said we're not without sin and won't be until we are glorified in heaven.

In Romans chapter 7, the apostle Paul felt the full weight of sinfulness of his fallen flesh. That's why he cries out that he's a wretched man and he wants to know if there's anyone that can set him free from this clinging body of death.

And it is at that moment the Holy Spirit steps in and gives to Paul and all generations of Jesus' followers for the rest of time till the Lord appears to take us home the most magnificent and eternal words anywhere in the Bible.

[13:52] The Spirit declares, Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And we're going to camp out with those words.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We know heaven is a perfect place, right?

So we can expect that upon our arrival there one day we will encounter no condemnation. But please note something. Romans 8 and 1 tells us there is now no condemnation.

He's speaking to this generation as much as He's spoken to any generation. No condemnation now for those who are in Christ.

The great Donald Gray Barnhouse, Dr. Barnhouse, who was at 10th Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, he wrote a commentary on Romans and in chapter, on the chapter concerning chapter 8 verse 1 of Romans, he said this, and I'm quoting, I know Greek.

[15:10] It is almost always begins with a negative. In light of that, we are almost forced to translate this verse with these words.

No possible condemnation is there. Therefore, for those who are now in Christ Jesus. So you see, Dr. Barnhouse begins with that negative.

No possible condemnation. And condemnation is a very interesting word and concept in the Word of God. It appears 66 times in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, it is used 21 times. In the New Testament, 45 times. When it appears in Romans 8.1, it has to be the greatest passage in all of Scripture.

A trillion millennia from now, as we measure time, there will still be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So where did our condemnation go?

[16:16] What happened to it? Well, it was nailed to a cross. It was nailed to the cross with Jesus. Jesus took our sins upon Himself and He imputed to us His righteousness.

We know this from many passages, but for me personally especially, 2 Corinthians 5.21, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Thus with the magnificent truth that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, we realize that Romans 8.1 is actually the gospel.

This is the gospel in a nutshell. This is the good news. No condemnation. There are many and various denominations that object to Paul's use of the word wretched to describe himself.

They claim that at this point in his life, Paul is a mature believer and this can't possibly describe him or any mature believer.

[17:39] They even erroneously claim that this has to be Paul describing his life prior to conversion. So how do we answer their question or their concerns?

Why does Paul, a mature believer, still consider himself to be wretched? In rejecting any concept that this could describe a mature believer, they miss the whole point of the gospel, the good news. Now I apologize if I seem a little worked up tonight, but I've had to fight this battle with many of my Arminian friends and with my own flesh. So what is the answer?

Now here's something for you to mark down in your mental file or in the margin of your Bible. The more mature you become as a follower of Christ, the more wretched you know yourself to be. That's just reality. Here's a great quote from Dr. MacArthur. As you grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ, as you grow through the process of sanctification, you will sin less, you will behave more righteously.

[19 : 07] The problem is that even though you sin less and are more righteous, you feel worse. Because to a righteous person, to a sanctified person, sin is worse.

It just is. It's reality. I'm trying to deliver to you the good news that sounds like bad news, but it's really not. It's good news.

Through sanctification, we see the pangs of sin in our flesh. Not in spite of becoming mature believers, but because we are mature believers, we feel bad about our sins that seem to cling to us. It may even cause us to feel worse about ourselves. But there is, brother, something real good here. The more we understand just how bad sin is, the more we understand how great grace is. The first thing we're able to do and encouraged to do as new baby believers is to worship God. MacArthur calls it the first priority, the ultimate priority.

[20 : 24] We're called upon to worship God through Christ and the power of the Spirit. As new baby believers, we didn't understand all the implications of that, but we worship because of the one who had taken up residence in us.

But when we come to the point of seeing the sinfulness of sin and the magnificence of grace, God puts us in the category of maturing worshipers.

So here's the good news. And again, this is vintage MacArthur. The battle is fierce. You have a corpse attached to you as a believer until the redemption of the body.

By the way, that's our unredeemed flesh. You're going to be serving the law of God with your inner man, but you're also going to have sin operative in your flesh.

But the news we want to hear is who are we in Christ Jesus? So who are we in Christ? We are secure in Him.

[21 : 40] This is good news. How are we secure in Him? We're never going to be condemned. That's security. That's security.

We're never going to be condemned. You will fight the battle. You will have victories. You will have defeats.

There are going to be times when we fail. There will be times when we succumb to temptation. You will at times feel like you're bearing about a certain kind of wretchedness.

A body of death strapped to you but have no fear. You will never be condemned. Not going to happen. And that's the good news.

Justification is forever. Salvation is forever. This is what motivates us and gives us strength and confidence even in our struggle.

[22 : 45] And that confidence and that knowledge of a no condemnation reality is secured to us by the work of the Holy Spirit. Now what does the Holy Spirit do for us?

I'm giving you this tonight in the hope it will whet your appetite to the point where you may want to return next week to hear more. This is what the Holy Spirit does for those who are freed from even the possibility of condemnation.

And all this is found in the 8th chapter of Romans. He gives us life. Spiritual life. Eternal life. He sets us free from judgment.

He enables us to keep God's law. Perfectly? No. Still fighting flesh. But He enables us.

He changes our nature. We go from Adam's nature to Christ's nature. He empowers us over temptation.

[23 : 57] He confirms our adoption as sons. And by the way, let me say, we taught adoption a couple of years ago. I didn't hit it hard enough because before you can be justified, sanctified, and glorified, you've got to be adopted.

I wish I'd said that back yonder. You've got to be adopted into God's family for those things to happen. Well, the Spirit of God in Romans 8 is going to confirm our adoption as sons.

He creates in us a longing for eternal glory. Like Dr. Sproul said, if I could walk through that door and be in heaven, I'd go right now. You could call Diane and tell her, I'm not coming home tonight.

She'd be all right with that. Now, death doesn't bother me, but the dying part does. Is it going to hurt or, you know, whatever. He intercedes for us according to the will of God.

He conforms us to Christ. He brings us to heaven. How does He do all this?

[25 : 10] How can He possibly do all that? Well, the answer lies in these words. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No condemnation. Let's pray. Father, what a magnificent truth that for Your children, those whom You have called and elected and who have been saved and are being conformed to the living Christ through sanctification, who are looking forward to glorification when we see Jesus as He is. what great truth is it that we do not have to fear condemnation. Discipline? Yes. We may be called to the woodshed.

Deservedly so. But no condemnation. What a magnificent truth it is, Lord. And we're going to uncover even more truths as we finish out our lesson on pursuing holiness in an unholy world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.