

No Condemnation

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[0 : 00] When we met a couple of weeks ago, He was regarded as the greatest Christian that ever lived.

He was the world's greatest missionary, a great witness for Christ, and a very great church planter. In chapter 7, Paul pours out his heart for his repeated failures as he tries to deal with the indwelling sin that permeates everything there is about him.

In that great chapter, we see the battle that rages with a spirit-filled man still living in unredeemed flesh.

And that's true about every believer in this room. It's true about every believer on earth. We live out our lives in unredeemed flesh. It's the same battle that we're all engaged in.

We can offer sort of an outline to describe the battle that Paul faced and these are some of the things we talked about. Being dead in trespasses and sins, fleshly, in bondage to sin, at war with ourselves as the spirit battles indwelling sin, a prisoner bound up by the law of sin, and then Paul kind of culminates it all in chapter 7 by referring to himself as a wretched man.

[1 : 55] Elsewhere, he's called himself the chief of sinners. What can we do to kind of help Paul around? We want to extricate him from his dilemma in Romans chapter 7.

And we all want to be removed and saved from the descriptions in Romans chapter 7 because it's about all of us in there. Well, of course, the answer is, first of all, we can't.

We can't do anything. But God, and I love those words. It's in the Bible a bunch. But God can. And God provides the solution for Paul and all of us in Romans chapter 8.

So we've got to the great Romans chapter 8. And some would argue the greatest chapter in the Bible. And I wouldn't argue against them. We've heard described the book of Romans as the Mount Everest of Scripture.

If that is true, and I personally believe it is, then chapter 8 is the very peak of that mountain. As we stand on chapter 8 and survey the landscape all around us.

[3 : 14] As we enter into a study of this great portion of Scripture, and we're going to be here a while, we find ourselves on the pinnacle.

But more than that, we find ourselves standing on holy ground. This is holy ground. And we begin just where we should begin.

And that's verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

What an amazing verse of Scripture.

Willard, I'm sure, would agree the old saying, that'll preach. That'll preach. That is a passage most worthy of memorization.

It's a passage worthy of contemplation to meditate on that. We all know that the chapters and verses were not part of the original text.

[4 : 16] They were added much later. These were letters that were written, just like very few people write letters anymore because of the internet. But these were added later.

And if I had been guessing, I would have said, well, they were added chapters and verses around 400 A.D. and I would have been wrong. I looked this up.

You can consider this for what it's worth. Our modern chapter divisions of the Bible were created by Stephen Langton and completed around A.D.

1227. Wycliffe's Bible, completed in 1382 before the printing press, was the first Bible to use Langton's chapter divisions.

Since this time, English Bible translations have followed the pattern with other languages adopting the same division system.

[5 : 17] Bible verses, those were chapters, Bible verses were created much later. The verses of the Old Testament were developed by a Jewish rabbi named Nathan in 1448.

The New Testament verses were developed in 1551 by Robert Estine, also known by the name of Stephanus. His divisions were first used in the Greek New Testament published in 1551 and were used again in the French Bible in 1553.

The influential Geneva Bible, and I have a copy of the Geneva Bible from the 16th century, was the first Bible to include both chapter and verse divisions for both Old and New Testaments.

Most Bibles published since these times have continued to use this system of chapters and verses. Well, what does that mean for our purposes of our study tonight?

originally, when what we know is Romans chapter 7 did not end with verse 25. It was a letter. It just continued on into what is now chapter 8 and verse 1.

[6 : 33] Additionally, the English translators added the words there is at the beginning of verse 1 so it would make sense in our language. So what the passage at the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8 really looked like when it was just a letter read like the following.

I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin, therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

that really can speak to your heart. That can speak to your heart. Just very emphatic. No condemnation. And that's powerful. That's powerful.

Over the years theologians have taken one of two positions on this passage. Some say the Holy Spirit has provided the answer to Paul's angst in chapter 7.

Paul has just poured out his failures at living the Christian life. And I read you a portion of that partial list earlier. It is then that the Holy Spirit steps in and basically says Paul, I understand.

[7 : 52] I understand your failures. I understand that you have failed at living the Christian life. and I understand your fallenness and fallen under an unredeemed flesh and the battle that rages in you.

So God makes a legal decision and a legal declaration that there will be no condemnation for true followers of Christ.

And I'll give you a little hint and we're going to head there in a moment. that's justification by faith.

That's what justification by faith is all about. Now other theologians take a bit broader view.

They say the comments of Romans 8.1 is a response to all that has transpired from Romans chapter 1 verse 1 to Romans chapter 7 verse 25.

And Paul writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit lays out for us the great doctrine of justification by faith in those chapters. As a reminder justification by faith is a legal declaration made by God that a person has been restored to a state of righteousness through belief and trust in the finished work of Christ and not on the basis of human works or supposed merit by the individual.

[9 : 30] We don't deserve it. We didn't earn it. We can't work for it. It's a grace gift of God where he legally declares us righteous. I had a little lady in my class yesterday morning and she said can you explain imputation?

I said sure. We are imputed with the righteousness of Christ. He was imputed with our sins. He took our sins. That's imputation. She said now I understand.

I said boy I hope I understand that. In this broader view some theologians believe that Paul is providing commentary in Romans 8 1 for the entire doctrine of justification by faith.

And that really does kind of make sense. So which group of theologians are correct? Is this merely a commentary about Romans chapter 7 or is this all of Romans and even before that other books of the New Testament even in the Old Testament?

Well which group is correct? Well I'll tell you what I believe. I believe they both are. I believe it encompasses all of that. I believe Romans 8 1 covers both the immediate problems expressed by Paul and Romans chapter 7 but in a broader sense is the result justification by faith in the first seven chapters as taught elsewhere in the Bible both Old and New Testament.

[11 : 02] So I take that broad view. There was no condemnation for true believers in the Old Testament either. So we can go all the way back. And of course there is no condemnation for those in Christ.

How did they get in Christ? They were justified by a merciful God. I've been thinking about that all week. Grace and mercy. Grace and mercy.

I've had people say to me from time to time, not frequently, but I had one guy in particular I'm thinking of, not even in Oklahoma, he said, I'm going to stand before God someday and demand

justice.

I said, trust me when I say this, you don't want justice. Don't give me justice, Lord, please. Because if I get one ounce of justice, I'm condemned forever. I don't want justice, I want mercy. I want grace. Please provide that. But there is no condemnation.

[12:08] We've been justified by a merciful God. Justification and condemnation are at polar opposites. That's the oil and water that won't mix or salt and pepper or you come up with anything.

You cannot have one mixing or commingling with the other. It is not condemnation and justification come together.

They're polar opposites. Either you have been justified, and remember, that is declared righteous by God, or if you haven't been, one day you will be eternally condemned.

Unless something happens between now and that judgment day, and it doesn't get any more black and white than that. But you can't commingle those two. They don't mix. The Word of God presents the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I like what one guy has said. The gospel of Christ is from Genesis 1-1 to just before maps in the back of your Bible. You move back into Revelation at the end there. That's the gospel.

[13:19] It's all in there. It is the good news that God has provided a salvation for His people, and it is based upon the finished work of Christ.

We look to Calvary. We look to the crucifixion. We look to His death, His burial. We also look to His resurrection. All those are taken together, and I think even beyond that, His ascension.

When He gets to heaven, the coronation, the fact that He's presently carrying on a daily, hour-by-hour, moment-by-moment ministry of intercession. That's what Jesus is doing right now. He's interceding for His children. That's us. So that is the finished work of Christ. The Bible also, at the same time, presents the fact that most people are dead in trespasses and sins.

They are not in a saving relationship with the Lord. That is the bad news of condemnation. We have in the Word of God the good news of salvation, and we have in the Word of God the bad news of condemnation.

[14:38] of a truth we can say that most people in this world are in dire straits of a most desperate situation brought about by their separation from God.

Now, I don't buy into guys like Barna, who does polls, and he says, well, there's 176 million Christians in America. And my question on that statistic is, where are they?

Where are they? And then you read the fine print, and he says, I define a Christian as anyone who has attended church at least one time in a single year.

That was the criteria. I mean, that's not the criteria, it shouldn't be. Most people are going to remain separated because they reject the evidence of creation, they reject the conscience, that small void in our heart that's crying out that there's a God out there, and they reject Christ.

They reject the Lord Jesus. So how do we get into these dire straits? What happened? Well, to do that, we have to go back and study, and we won't tonight at any length because we've done it before, the words of Genesis chapter three.

[16:03] That's where it all began. And there we have recorded the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Mankind, and there are only two kinds then, Adam and Eve, chose disobedience over obedience.

And when our original parents went down that road, every human sense has been born into this world possessing a sin nature. I didn't add this to my notes, but my grandchildren were visiting for the last few days, my youngest grandchildren.

The one-year-old who named after my wife, Diane's got this beautiful display of pumpkins, very expensive.

She got at the pottery, Polish pottery place in Springfield. These are expensive. And my one-year-old would go up and want to touch them, want to play with them.

But she got to where she would reach one, and then she'd look back at me. She knew she was doing wrong. We all know when we do wrong, she's one year old. And I'd say, no, no, and she'd move her hand, she'd go to the next one.

[17:14] She finally broke one. I'm sure my wife was pretty tough on her. We chose sin. I remember when I was a new believer, Don Arling in bed, and I'm reading this, and I said, oh my gosh, I never saw that before.

We fell in the Garden of Eden because Eve ate the forbidden fruit. And she said, well, where was Adam? I said, oh, he was probably tilling ground over three counties away. She said, let me see that. I had no choice. It says, and Adam who was with her, and that's why it's called Adam's sin. He should have stepped in.

I heard a pastor the other day that said, Adam should have killed that serpent. That's what he said. He should have killed that serpent. But instead, they chose disobedience, and we are all born in with a sin nature.

When Adam, and it's called his sin, chose disobedience, the wellhead of the human race was poisoned.

[18 : 25] It was tainted with sin. Everything that has flowed from the wellhead is tainted with sin.

Everything. And I would hate to have to tell my Catholic friends, including Mary, sin. The only one, of course, is the Lord Jesus, and he's the God man, the unique God man.

But everything else flowing from that wellhead was tainted with sin. Our nature changed in the garden. Now we have a sin nature.

It is our nature to sin. People sometimes ask me, do we have free will? And my answer is yes, absolutely. In our sin nature inherited from Adam, we have the freedom to choose what sin we're going to commit.

So, yeah, we have a free will. We can choose what sin we're going to commit. This is referred to, by the way, as the doctrine of total inability. We are incapable of choosing God.

[19 : 28] And most people on earth reject that thought. It's the truth. That is why Jesus told us that God must choose us. We studied that in John chapter 6 as part of this lesson.

That is why Paul tells us in the third chapter of Romans there is none who choose God. There is none who choose God. Does that mean that humans are incapable of doing some good things? Of course not. We're very capable of doing good things. Happens all the time. I think of Dr. Salk who invented the polio vaccine. He may have saved as many as a billion lives.

And when I was a little child, polio was ravishing. Oscar, you remember those? It was ravishing the nature. Going to an iron lung.

Remember, you had those kids in iron lungs. I mean, it was a scary time. Dr. Salk came up with this vaccine. Dr. Salk died an agnostic Jew.

[20 : 32] Never believed in Christ. Never believed in God. Wasn't sure there was a God. a Jewish man who didn't believe. I'll let God deal with that. It also does not mean that as humans we are as bad as we possibly can be.

There's always room for us to get worse. I mean, I hate to say it, but Adolf Hitler, at least he got the trains to run on time. He killed responsible for the deaths of 58 million people in World War II, 11 million the chosen people.

But there's always room for us to get much worse. Everything we do in our lost condition has sin somewhere lurking nearby.

It's close by. It's always sniffing around our doormat and ready to pounce. That's our sin nature.

That, of course, changes when Christ redeems us.

the Holy Spirit takes up residence us, and now, as believers in Christ, we sin as a matter of choice.

[21 : 40] We have the power within us and the ability to not sin, but we also have the ability to choose sin. And I can't speak for any of you, but I do that all too often.

I'm sure no one else battles that, but that's me. That's the internal battle raging within us that Paul wrote about in Romans chapter 7. And a lot of theologians try to make Paul an unbeliever there. He's not yet saved. That's a saved man in the battle that we all face. And I'm so glad we have Romans chapter 7. And I'm so glad it links into Romans chapter 8.

Many things happened to us when we were saved. One of those is condemnation flees and is replaced by justification.

Doesn't mean sometimes we don't feel like we deserve condemnation, but we must remember that we don't. And we must remember that this never gives us license to sin.

[22 : 41] We have no license to sin. It gives us the freedom to not sin. We can choose not to sin. We have that power within us. Greater is he that's in you than he's in the world.

And when we sin, and that's really the language of the New Testament, when we sin, we have an advocate, and that's a Greek word for defense attorney, Jesus Christ the righteous one.

Show me a person who thinks he can go and sin all he wants to because he's now under the grace of God. I will show you a person that has never experienced the saving grace of God.

They just haven't. You can't possibly arrive at that conclusion, that it's a license to sin. Dr. Rogers said it quite well, the unbeliever leaps into sin and loves it, the believer lapses into sin and loathes it. So in verse 1 of Romans chapter 8, the apostle Paul announces great news. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[23 : 56] And we all know that the Greek language is much more expressive than our English. Paul uses the word no here, no condemnation here in Greek.

That's called an emphatic negative adverb of time. Now I have no idea what that means. And I am thankful for Greek scholars that do know. It means there is a complete secession of any condemnation.

Condemnation is no longer the issue for the true believers. And you know, we live in a time where we always have to add that word. That's just the day we live in. The true believer. People ask me all the time, do you believe in what's saved?

Always saved. I say, no, I believe in what's truly saved. Always saved. We have to add those words. I would imagine that many of you remember the parable of the king who forgave one of his slaves. Let me read it to you at Matthew chapter 18, verse 23 and on. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

[25 : 05] When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. That's a lot of money. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had in payment to be made.

So the servant fell on his knees imploring him, have patience with me and I will pay you everything. And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. He just forgave him the debt. That's a picture of the Lord Jesus forgiving all of the sins of those who came to him in humble contrition and faith.

I mean, people ask me, what's my part at the cross? Bring several buckets full of sin. Bring all your sins and present them to Christ. That is a picture of the gospel of Christ.

There we see Jesus paying in full, that's an important thought, in full our debt of sin and paying in full the penalty of the law, which is condemnation to death.

[26 : 17] And that's precisely what happened to the Lord, right? Now, we've already alluded to John's words in his epistle of 1 John. We've already mentioned Christ as our advocate.

That's in 1 John chapter 2. Let me read that portion more completely starting in verse 1. My little children, it's a beautiful word in Greek. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

God never wants us to sin. But if anyone does sin, and I'm told in the Greek that's more like, since you're going to sin, or when you sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. That is better rendered when we sin. Jesus is our divine defense attorney appearing before the Father to represent us. He is our propitiation, meaning He is our satisfaction before the Father.

[27 : 29] The Father's wrath for our sins has been completely satisfied, completely appeased. He is satisfied completely with the sacrifice of His Son, so much so to totally remove our sin debt.

And aren't we happy? Aren't we happy? Jesus intercedes for us. That is important because Satan intercedes against us.

Satan is there saying, you won't believe what Tom Holland did today for the millionth time. And the Father probably says, yeah, I probably will believe you. And we see this intercessory battle played out every moment of every day.

And Jesus says, He's one of mine. And the Father says, I'm satisfied. That's enough for me. And by the way, don't be confused by the comment that the Lord Jesus propitiated the sins of the whole world.

that is the whole world of believers. Now, it has to be that way. If the whole world, meaning everybody in the whole world, then there's no need for hell.

[28 : 41] No one's going to be there. Or will ever go there. Why? If your sins have been propitiated, appeased, forgiven, then there's no grounds for condemnation.

But we know there are people even in hell now. We know many are going there for their rejection of Christ. So this is a comment of the whole world of Christ's followers.

It has to be that way or we need to hang a sign or send Unitarian Universalist Baptist Church at Highland Park. The important thing to remember here is the absence of condemnation for the genuine believer.

There is no condemnation because there is no sin to condemn. Those were put on Christ. He bore our condemnation. Those were taken care of at the cross.

If when we appear before the Lord, there is any sin left, we're most to be pitied. God won't allow sin in His presence. In the judgment, we either have sinless perfection of Christ granted us by grace and mercy or we'll steer dead in trespasses and sin.

[29 : 57] There's no middle ground there. But because Jesus has paid the penalty, any possibility of condemnation is gone.

But, I have to add in a but, it's important to remember that deliverance from condemnation does not mean deliverance from discipline.

Two different things. God makes this quite apparent in the 12th chapter of the book of Hebrews. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves and chastises every son whom He receives.

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. What son is there whom his father does not discipline?

If you are left without discipline in which all have participated then you are an illegitimate child and not sons. Besides this we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.

[31 : 12] Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them but he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

I think often of King David and the mess he got into it starts out he says in the spring when kings went out to do battle for God David was in Jerusalem and you all know the story and there's a whole link of sins there a dozen sins but he sees Bathsheba he likes what he sees and writes her over her husband is out fighting to make sure David's crown and throne are kept intact and we all know the story that she becomes pregnant he tries to coerce her husband can't do it and he ends up killing him kills him has him killed and then Nathan the prophet shows up and I can see this in my mind and he goes through that litany there's a guy in your kingdom that's rich beyond compare he's got herds of cattle and oxen and sheep and goats and he had one servant who was very humble and very obedient to him and he owned one ewe lamb and it was more like a child and he slept with his kids and they loved him and he ate from his hand at his table and the rich man who had untold wealth had a visitor come and he took the servant's one ewe lamb and killed it and fed it to his visitor now in

Hebrew what David said is that man's going to die he's going to be executed but before he does he's going to repay fourfold to that servant and then I think there was this pregnant pause and I think Nathan was staring down David and David got confused and kind of like why didn't he say anything and that's when David said you are the man you are the man I think David hit his face he realized he was he got down in the dirt and began to repent and then Nathan said something really interesting and this will preach he said God has not taken away your salvation he still loves you but and boy that but was an important injection and then he relays to David everything that's going to happen to him in his house because of those sins and it was telling it was rough and it was fourfold I mean a daughter raped by a son and I mean it was just it went on and on and on he paid it fourfold you can read in Psalm 51 and in Psalm 32 the repentance of David in those Psalms if you've never experienced discipline from the Lord you might want to examine yourself to make sure you're in the body of Christ every son receives discipline in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation we have the seven churches those were real churches I was over in that area and I was at the church of Smyrna those were real churches and there were types of churches throughout the church age five of those churches receive ever increasing condemnation for their actions starting with Ephesus who lost their first love they were orthodox they had the right doctrines but they didn't love Jesus five received increasing condemnation finally when you come to the last church the church at Laodicea

[35 : 20] Jesus isn't even inside the church he's outside knocking on the door now we use that for evangelism guys that's not evangelism that's a godless church in there and he said if you got one believer in there I'd be inside but I'm outside because you don't have any believers in there and let me just say to you there are many such churches on earth today many of them including in America but of the seven churches to receive no condemnation that's what we've been talking about tonight that takes us back to Romans 8 1 to receive no condemnation one of those is the church at Smyrna which I've been to more like its modern counterpart I'm sure the original church is long gone and the other is the church at Philadelphia we have Philadelphia Pennsylvania the city of brotherly love I've been there it's not but that's what they call it the church at Smyrna is the church that endured intense persecution let me tell you what persecute to you

I should have mentioned this yesterday in the service and I just forgot to one thing persecution will do it purges the church people that aren't genuine don't want to hang around and be persecuted for something they really don't believe in and they leave at Smyrna you had this kernel of gold almost pure gold of the members there being intensely persecuted but they stayed and that happens all over the world they're this uncondemned church because there's believers there there's no condemnation for believers the other church the church in Philadelphia was the church intently engaged in world missions in evangelism the very things that we're doing those two churches were made up of believers and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus