

# No Condemnation

---

Romans 8:1

February 18, 2018

## Introduction:

A couple of years back our family had the opportunity to visit the Smoky Mountains down in Tennessee. As a guy who grew up and lived in the Midwest all my life, I don't get to see mountains very often, so I'm always eager to get out and enjoy the scenic beauty of it all. So we drove to the highest peak in the Appalachians called Clingmans Dome and hiked up to the observatory at the very top. Though we were short-winded by the time we made it all the way up, the view was absolutely stunning! Our hike was rewarded with a panoramic view of the mountains where we could see for dozens of miles out all of God's natural creation spread out like a feast for the eyes before us.

In a way, Romans 8 is like reaching the summit of a mountain. Once you reach it, you're greeted by stunning beauty as far as the eye can see. For many, the book of Romans is regarded as the most majestic book of all of Scripture and they consider Romans 8 to be the very pinnacle of it, the place where believers can take in the cool, refreshing air of God's grace and stand in awe of the grandeur of the view.

We've traveled a difficult path thus far. We started at the beginning of last year in the valley of Romans 1, where we were confronted with the bad news that God's wrath stood against all mankind because of sin. We had to wander in the dark forest of Romans 1-3 as we were reminded again and again of our failure to live in accordance with God's Word and how his anger against us was indeed just and right. Then we came upon a bright clearing as the light of the gospel came beaming through Romans 3:21 through chapter 5 as we learned that our justification came to us by grace through faith. But then we continued on in our journey through the challenging objections Paul needed to clear up in chapters 6 & 7, lest the glories of the gospel be shrouded in the fog of misunderstandings. But this morning, at last the fog has cleared and we have reached the summit!

So over the next number of weeks, like those who finally reach the top of the mountain, we are going to take our time and enjoy the view. There are few chapters anywhere else in the Bible that can come close to matching the splendors of what we find here and so we want to give it our due attention and allow it to soak deep into our hearts and minds as we delight in the precious promises of God found throughout. So to that end, let's begin to enjoy the view as you open your Bibles with me to Romans 8. While it is always my hope that you bring your own personal copy of the Bible with you on Sunday mornings, for those of you who don't have it, you can find today's passage on pg. 944.

We're only going to be looking at one verse today, but oh what a verse it is! Listen now as I read what the apostle Paul has to say in Romans 8:1. He writes, "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**" We dare not rush past this verse too quickly because contained within those two words "**no condemnation**" is a breathtaking promise that has the power to transform us if we would only allow the truth of what it teaches penetrate our soul.

So let's consider what Paul means by saying there is **"no condemnation"** in three particular respects, the first of which is this...

### 1. **No condemnation is the glorious result of the gospel**

What I mean by this needs to be unpacked by examining the word **"therefore"** Paul uses here in verse 1. Paul is drawing a conclusion based on what he said previously, and I think his reference is to far more than what he said in the paragraph right before this. Now that he's done correcting the erroneous conclusions he needed to deal with in chapters 6-7, Paul is ready to return to laying out the wonderful implications of the gospel that he started talking about in chapter 5.

Speaking of the gospel, do you remember how I've often taught you to think about the gospel? Hang your thoughts on four pegs: God, sin, Christ, and faith. Well, that's exactly what Paul has been doing in Romans so far. He taught that God is a righteous God deserving of all our praise and thanks. But what have we done? We worshiped what was created rather than the Creator. Even though the Jews had the written Law of Moses and the Gentiles had the righteous requirements of the law written on their hearts, both groups fell short of doing what they knew they should have done. Instead of obedience, they sinned, over and over and over again. But then Paul told us that Christ did for us what we failed to do. He lived the righteous life we should have lived and then in turned suffered the wrath of God in our place on the cross, as our sins were counted as if they were his. Then Paul reminded us that we've received this not by our works but rather by faith, simply by trusting in the promises of God, believing them to be true. That's the gospel: God's righteousness, our sin, Christ's suffering on our behalf, and our response in faith.

**"Therefore,"** in light of the gospel, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Now this is only good news if we've recognize what our spiritual condition was apart from Christ. We were not in a morally neutral position before God. We stood condemned. We were, as Paul said in Ephesians 2, children of wrath, not children of God. He described us aa dead in our trespasses and sin. We were dead men walking, which is a term used for men on death row who were walking down the corridor to their execution. You and I had a death sentence on us that could at any moment come into effect, ushering you into the presence of God's holy anger and into the fires of hell.

But Christ took your sins upon himself on the cross, suffering the punishment you deserved. As a result, there's no punishment left to suffer. God's just wrath has been completely satisfied in Christ. Therefore, there is no condemnation left for you to fear. Jesus paid it all. Every bit of it. It's not as if you owed a massive debt to God and Jesus paid most, but not all of it. Jesus didn't die for 75% of your sins 90% or 99% - he paid for every sin, 100%. There is nothing left to pay. There's no debt outstanding you owe or need to have someone else make up the difference for you. It's paid in full.

There's no more glorious news than can be had for sinners. I've never been put on trial for a crime, but if I had, if I had committed some terribly heinous act and was facing the death penalty for my actions, I couldn't imagine any better two words to be uttered by a

judge than the words, “Not guilty.” Those words communicate that you are no longer under condemnation for your crime and are free to be released. What joy it would be to have faced certain death and yet be set free without fear of punishment! Yet we were not merely facing the electric chair or lethal injection: our punishment was to be eternal death in hell for our sins. So how much more glorious is it to know we are no longer facing the eternal condemnation of God and instead have been set free!

So my friends, take confidence and joy in this. If there is a verse the devil would have you forget, it’s this one. We are so easily deceived into slipping back into guilt and fear over our sins, thinking that God may yet cast us out for our moral failures. We can be racked with shame over our sinfulness and worry that perhaps we’ve committed some unpardonable sin that will cause us to lose our salvation. But God Word’s tells us this truth - there is no condemnation left for you. None. There is no one who can bring a charge against you that would alter the verdict purchased for you by Christ. In Christ, there is no condemnation to fear. God’s wrath is no longer against you. The fear, guilt, and shame that once was ours has been completely taken from us.

I think of a verse from the hymn “Before the Throne of God Above” that says this,

“When Satan tempts me to despair,  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look, and see Him there  
Who made an end of all my sin.”

I can offer you no greater words of encouragement than this: “**no condemnation.**” In Christ you are under no condemnation for you sin. For each and every one of us, this is a verse worth memorizing and repeating to ourselves over and over. The good news of the gospel is found right here: Christ was condemned so we don’t have to be.

But there is more to be said about there being no condemnation for us, and that moves us on to our second point I wish to make this morning and that is this...

## 2. **No condemnation is a present reality, not merely a future hope**

There’s a little word here in v. 1 we can gloss over but I think it’s worth highlighting for us and that’s the word “**now.**” Paul says, “**There is therefore *now* no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**” That word now communicates a couple of very important things, the first of which concerns our salvation history.

Whereas before we were under the law, now things have changed. As Paul has said earlier in Romans, what the law was powerless to do before, Christ has done for us in the here and now. So the “now” here reminds us to contrast the present with the past. Things are not what they were before. We were under the wrath of God for our sins previously. God had given us over to ever-increasing wickedness and debauchery. We were slaves to sin, dead in our transgressions, doing those things we knew we should not do and not doing the things God commanded us to do, as Paul so clearly expressed at the end of Romans 7. That was the sorry state of affairs back then.

But *now*, now the situation is radically different. The bondage of our wills to sin, the inability to do what we knew we ought to have done, the enslavement to sinful desires, the guilt, shame, and despair we once operated under is now done away with. That was then, this is now, and right now there is no condemnation for us because Christ our Lord has liberated us both from sin's penalty and sin's power. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, if anyone is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come! The shackles of sin and the condemnation for sin are a thing of the past. Now, in the present, we are free from the fear of God's wrath and the threat of his eternal judgment.

So then, brothers and sisters in Christ here at Grace Fellowship, leave the past behind you. You're not what you were before. Now, today, because of what Christ has done, you are free. Free of the fear that God will condemn you for your sins. Free of the enslavement to sinful desires that once ruled over you. Free of needless guilt and shame for the things you've done. Free of the uncertainty that comes with always trying to measure up to God's demands of obedience based upon your own merits. Now is not the past. You were under God's condemnation once, yes, it's true, but now you are not because Jesus paid it all. There is now no condemnation left for you because in Christ the wrath of God was perfectly satisfied.

But not only do we need to consider this word "**now**" in relation to the past, but we need also to see its relationship to the future. What I mean by this is that when Paul says there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, it means it not merely as a *potential* future reality but a *present* condition that is true right now, today, in this moment, and will permanently remain true.

The reason this is important to highlight is because some Christians believe that there is no condemnation as long as they make effort to maintain their salvation by their own works. So they might say, "Yes, there is no condemnation for those who remain in Christ, but should I sin and not confess it or if I should walk away from God or backslide, then I can possibly forfeit my salvation." In other words, if they sin, they can once again find themselves back under condemnation. Their present sins could undo the future hope of escaping God's wrath, causing them to fall back into condemnation provided they didn't repent. Thus they think a person could lose his salvation, falling in and out of condemnation numerous times throughout their life, based upon whether they remained faithful to God. Thus, they would say that while there may be no condemnation as a future hope that we hope to attain, nevertheless we might not because our sins might undo it.

My friends, when Paul says that, "**There is now no condemnation**" he means this is a present reality that will not change in the future. It doesn't mean, "For now, provided you remain faithful, there is no condemnation, but that very well could change in the future depending on what you do." No! Rather, it means, "Now, and continuing on without fail until the day we stand before the throne of God, there is no condemnation for you." And I can say this with confidence because Paul will say later near the end of chapter 8 that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ, neither height nor depth, angels nor demons, tribulation nor sword, nor anything else - including our own

sin - can undo what Christ has done. So the “now” here is not a provisional now; it is a permanent now. **“Now”** and permanently going forward, without interruption of fail, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

So listen, as a Christian, you are not under condemnation for your sins. That isn't a hope for the future; it is a settled reality right now, as you sit here in this sanctuary, and that will never change. It doesn't matter how you feel about it. If you're struggling with sin right now, there is no condemnation for you. If you have doubts and questions, there is no condemnation for you. If you haven't been the best husband or wife as of late, if you've been harsh with your children, if you've messed up at your job, if your thoughts and words have been less than pure, if you haven't had a quiet time this past week, if you've been gripped by pain of your suffering and you're angry at God for the situation you find yourself in, listen carefully: there is no condemnation for you. Right now. Today. This very moment. Nor will there ever be because Jesus satisfied the wrath of God against you for your sin once and for all.

Believe this beautiful word, **“now,”** because some of you here need to hear that word right now. Whatever the lies Satan might be feeding you, causing doubt and fear, guilt and shame, worry and despair, banish the lies with this word, **“now.”** Right now, no matter what you've done, there is absolutely no condemnation awaiting you. God no longer stands against you; in Christ, he is for you and will be for you, from this day forevermore. Believe that. Preach that to yourself until the roots of this precious promise bury themselves deep into the soil of your heart that the storms of life can never uproot it. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

So then, while it is important we see that as a result of the Christ's atoning sacrifice we are no longer under God's condemnation for our sin and that this is a present reality we enjoy right now, the final observation we need to make concerns to whom this glorious news is true for. So moving on to our third and final point, we need to see that...

### **3. No condemnation is only available to those who are in Christ Jesus**

While Christ has fully paid the penalty for sin by dying on the cross, it does not benefit everybody. As Paul has stated repeatedly throughout Romans, we're justified by faith. The atonement isn't universally applied to every human being; a person needs to be **“in Christ Jesus”** by repenting of their sin and turning to him in faith.

This needs to be stated explicitly because sometimes we can get sloppy with our language when it comes to the cross. We may say, “Jesus died for the sins of the world,” and that is true, to an extent. Did Jesus die for the sins of those from every tribe, tongue, and nation, such that Jesus is not the Savior of just the Jews but of the Gentiles as well? Yes, absolutely! Is Christ's atoning sacrifice sufficient to cover over the sins of every single person on the face of the earth? You bet! Did Christ actually atone for every single person's sin? Not at all. If that were the case, then everyone would be assured of heaven. If God's poured out his wrath for each and every sin for each and every person who ever lived, on what basis would God be able to condemn anyone to hell? There's no such thing as double-jeopardy in the courtroom of God.

He isn't going to condemn a person for a sin he has already punished. If Jesus really did die for every sin of every person, then hell would be empty because all the sins that would have earned you hell would have already been paid for by Christ.

So then, while Christ's death is *sufficient* to cover all sin, it *actually* only covers the sins of those who are in Christ Jesus through faith. If you are in Christ through being born again, having repented of your sins and trusting in Christ as your Lord and Savior, then there is indeed no condemnation because Christ's life and death are reckoned to you. But if you haven't, then you are still in your sins, still under God's wrath, and there is still the terrifying prospect of the condemnation under which you currently stand. The wonderful good news of this verse applies only to those who are in Christ by faith in his death and resurrection.

So on the one hand, if you are in Christ, you should rejoice exceedingly over the truth of this verse: there is no condemnation for you. Jesus paid it all. Praise God for that! But on the other hand, there should come with this the sobering realization that there is condemnation awaiting all those who are not in Christ Jesus. Jesus' can be the Savior for all, but he's only the Savior of those who come to him in faith. For those who aren't Christians, whether you're Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist or an atheist, you are still in your sins and therefore under God's wrath, no matter how sincerely or devotedly you practice your religion or lack thereof.

Therefore, we must not merely sit and soak in the glories of the redemption we have so graciously received by faith, but we must get up and go in order to present the offer of the gospel to those who are currently under condemnation. As Paul will say later on in his letter, after reflecting on how his own countrymen, the Jews, have on a whole rejected Christ and therefore still remain under God's wrath, he asks, how then will they believe in him if they haven't heard? And how will they hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? In other words, since Christ is still rejected, we must go so Christ might be proclaimed, because without the message of the gospel being heard, none will believe and therefore they will remain under condemnation for their sin.

## **Conclusion**

So as I wrap this message up, I want to both comfort you and challenge you. There can be no more beautiful words of comfort and joy than to know that there is no condemnation awaiting you because of Christ. God's wrath has been satisfied at the cross. Your sin, both those of the past and those you will yet do in the future, have been paid for, fully and without exception. If you're a Christian, God does not stand against you. He is not angry with you. He is not opposed to you. He is not waiting to strike you with lightning when you mess up. You now have peace with God because your sins have all been atoned for. My friends, believe that truth - there is no condemnation left for you because Jesus Christ, your Lord, paid it all. Rejoice with great rejoicing for he has canceled your debt of sin and redeemed you as his child!

But let me also challenge you to proclaim this good news of the gospel to the world because the glorious promise of no condemnation is only true for those who are in Christ Jesus by faith. Many are still under the wrath of God because they haven't yet heard the gospel and believed, and God has called you and I to tell this good news to them. So I challenge you to not merely delight in the gospel but proclaim it as well. The continual goal here at Grace Fellowship is for you to be *Salt & Light* by identifying three people you have regular contact with who are not believers and seek to proclaim the gospel to them. Be intentional about that in your life. Live on mission because you want those you work with and live near to know the joy of having their sins forgiven forever as you have.

We are now under no condemnation because of Christ Jesus, so believe it joyfully and then proclaim passionately it to others. Let's close now in prayer.

**This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Grace Fellowship of Waterloo, IA by Pastor Rob Borkowitz. Copyright 2018.**