

Romans (8:1)

Condemnation Proof

Part 27 – February 27, 2005

FAUX CONDEMNATION

I want to take a moment to build up to today's scripture. At the end of our last session, Paul was crying out on behalf of every depressed, discouraged, and defeated believer:

What a wretched man I am! – Romans 7:24a NIV

Doing the very things I do not want to do, I can't even measure up to my own standard, let alone the Lord's! And Paul asked:

Who will rescue me from this body of death? – Romans 7:24b NIV

Remember, we have those smoldering coals of the old nature, just waiting for little fuel, a little oxygen ... and *whoomp*.

Q: Anybody in here do *anything at all* (this week) that you regret in any way having thought or said or done?

Now, if you had to really think about that – or you said “no” – I'm guessing you're not watching yourself very closely! Our maturity can be measured not only by the obvious sins we overcome, but also the subtle sins we no longer overlook.

But sensitive to sin can lead to self-condemnation. And we can be oblivious to the fact that regretful thoughts, words, and deeds are *not* the conclusion of spiritual combat. When I sin, the devil doesn't go: Ahh, my job here is done! There's a reason he's referred to as *the accuser* (Rev. 12:10).

We tend to see our sin as a “sprung trap” ... unaware that there's a bigger, *un-sprung* trap, and our sin is the cheese (i.e. bait).

Guilt, remorse, and shame are the *normal* results of sin. That's what prompts repentance and promotes restoration. That is, unless our guilt *intensifies* into a “guilt trip”.

The enemy can intensify natural guilt, remorse, and shame into a *weapon* to separate us further from God, by saying things like: You committed *that* sin again ... what a loser! God expected you to be *way past* that by now! God is irritated, annoyed, and irate at you!

Q: Ever felt like you've committed a certain sin so many times that you're embarrassed to even ask for forgiveness again?

That was the enemy! He does that. And he does it, because:

- Condemnation traps Christians.

It renders us hopeless, fruitless, and ineffective. And he traps us further by offering to help us escape and/or numb the pain of this *artificial condemnation* he's created.

NO CONDEMNATION

We're only going to read one verse today: Romans 8:1. This is one of, if not the most significant half-sentences in all of scripture!

- We should mark it, memorize it, and meditate on it.

This simple statement is the central, foundational message of God to this world; it's what we proclaim to the lost. It is the very *essence* of Christianity.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... -
Romans 8:1 NIV

This is what robs the accuser of all his power! This is what brings us freedom, joy, and peace! Stare at it; absorb it ... now, let's read it with emphasis.

Therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus ... -
Romans 8:1 NIV

Paul is speaking to believers whose guilt and shame has been intensified after doing that which they did not want to do.

TWO JUDGES

Paul is offering the practical application of all he has written so far in this letter to the Romans. God wants us to let our condemnation fall on Christ.

Let's pretend you're on trial for a capital offense. If you're pronounced guilty, you'll be put to death. If you're pronounced not-guilty, you'll be set free.

- In one scenario, the judge irrevocably acquits you, and releases you to live a free and joyful life that demonstrates that you're really not a *crime-loving* law breaker.

- In another scenario, the judge postpones the verdict and assigns a parole officer to watch and scrutinize your conduct. The verdict will then be based on your behavior.

Q: Which scenario sums up the way you're living out your faith?

Q: Are you free from condemnation, full of appreciation and joy, and regularly reflecting on what God has done through Christ?

Q: Or, is there a future trial (that'll be based on behavior and performance) hanging over your head?

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Romans 8:1 NIV

WHEN I SIN

There are three incredible things that do NOT happen when I sin.

1. God does NOT reject me.

In John 6:37, Jesus said:

... those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. -
John 6:37 NLT

Paul uses the title "In Christ" 164 times (in the NT) and it's the one condition for not being condemned.

Q: Do you know what it means to be "in Christ"?

I want you to think about Noah's Ark. When the ark was finished, and the supplies and animals were loaded, Noah took his family into the ark.

Then the Lord shut him in. - Genesis 7:16 NIV

The water represented God's judgment and condemnation. And *God* made sure that Noah was safely out of the reach of God's wrath.

- A. Noah wasn't kicked out of the ark when he sinned.
- B. Noah was expected to deal with a lot of ... *manure*.
 - So, I'm not expected to live a perfect life.
 - And I'm not to expect my life to be perfect.

God will not reject us if we're "in Christ," because our acceptance isn't based on our performance it's on our position.

- To reject us would be to reject Christ himself.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... -
Romans 8:1 NIV

God understands that it takes time for us to grow. He's fully aware of our human frailties, weaknesses, and inconsistencies.

2. (Therefore, when I sin) God does NOT get upset with me.

To be upset (or angry) you *have* to be disappointed. God has *never been* disappointed in you; God is *not* disappointed in you now; and God can *never be* disappointed in you.

Q: Do you know why that absolutely, without a doubt, is true?

A: To be disappointed you have to expect something *different*.

- My sin might surprise me, but it *can't* shock God.

He has *always* known every mistake you'll ever make, and every sin you'll ever commit ... and still he stamped your passport!

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... -
Romans 8:1 NIV

3. (And finally) God does NOT penalize me.

God will correct our course, discipline, and redirect us when we sin, because he loves us (and sin harms us). But he won't seek retribution, because that would be "punishment as payment" for our sin; and Christ already paid that "ticket".

To exact something else from us would be saying that Jesus didn't do enough to cover our sin. And that's blasphemy. Jesus bore the *full penalty* for my sin.

If we fail to grasp the reality of that, we not only expect God to punish us when we sin, but we start looking for it. "Maybe I got sick because God is repaying me."

Some people spend their lives thinking God is getting even with them for a sin they committed twenty years ago!

There could certainly be temporary consequences, but ...

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