

Romans
No Condemnation! (Part 1)
Romans 8:1-4
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I am so excited today to begin our study of Romans 8. My own love for this chapter started early in seminary; it was in those days that I first found “Grace to You” radio and not long after I began tuning in, John MacArthur began a sermon series preaching through Romans 8. It was the very first time in my life that I had heard this chapter explained. After hearing just a couple of the messages as he began the series, I did what I had never done before, and I have never done since. I contacted a radio ministry, and I asked them if I could have the study guide that came along with the sermon series. Back in those days there were study guides, and so I asked for that, and I received it. It was entitled, “Security in the Spirit.” I still have it in my office.

In God’s providence, I would later go on to work at “Grace to You” and initially my job was to edit those study guides. But the truths that I learned in this chapter, Romans 8, truly changed my life. They reshaped my understanding of the Christian faith in a way that remains imprinted on my soul to this day. And so, it is with great joy and great anticipation that I look forward to leading us all through this magnificent chapter in Scripture. It’s hard to say that you have a favorite chapter; it’s a bit dangerous isn’t it when you start talking like that? But I have to say that if I had to vote, if I was told that I was going to be marooned and I could have one chapter from the Bible, I think it would be this one, Romans 8.

The theme of this chapter is the absolute security of the Christian, the absolute security of the Christian. You can say it that way, or there are a number of other ways you could say it. You could say it is about the certainty of the final perseverance of the saints; or you could say it is the ultimate salvation of everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ; or you could say it provides the assurance of eternal life. But, however you say it, that is the driving truth behind this wonderful chapter. Everything in this chapter is here to prove that to us and to encourage us in that truth. In fact, it’s interesting there isn’t a single imperative, not one command in Romans 8. Instead, it is all here to give us the direct application of the gospel that Paul has been preaching to our lives as believers.

Now, let me give you an overview of the sort of flow of Paul’s thought as he develops it in this great chapter. The salvation of the genuine Christian is secure because of seven amazing

reasons. Now, if you don't get all of these down, don't worry about it; this is just to give you a sort of the roadmap of where we're going, you'll see these again. But here are the reasons Paul provides for the absolute security of the Christian.

Reason 1 is in verses 1 - 4: It's because God has delivered us from condemnation.

Reason 2 comes in verses 5 - 13: God has changed and empowered us by His Spirit.

Reason 3 in verses 14 - 17: We are secure because God has adopted us as His children.

Reason 4 comes in verses 18 - 25: God has destined us for glory.

Reason 5 in verses 26 and 27: We are secure, our ultimate salvation is guaranteed because God has given us His Spirit as an intercessor.

Reason 6 in verses 28 - 30: Because God has called us to Himself according to His eternal plan. You see, my salvation isn't just some random accidental event. It is part of a great, sweeping, eternally conceived Trinitarian plan, and therefore it will happen; it's guaranteed.

And reason 7, verses 31 - 39: For many, the favorite verses in this entire chapter, this tells us that we are secure because God has set His eternal love upon us in Jesus Christ. Those are the reasons for the absolute security of the Christian.

Now, when I give you that theme, I understand that you may have heard a different theme. There are some who say that this chapter is about the Holy Spirit and His work in sanctification. There are certainly elements of truth in that, but I would say that this chapter is not primarily about the Spirit nor is it primarily about sanctification; instead I hope I will prove to you in the weeks ahead that it is about our security and assurance because of the work of God in our lives. It is true, I will admit to you that the Holy Spirit is only referenced one time in all of chapter 7, that's in 7:6; and He's mentioned many times here in chapter 8.

But having said that, it's important to realize that's not the whole story. In fact, this week, I went through chapter 8, and I counted all of the times that the members of the Trinity are mentioned or alluded to. Let me give it to you. The Spirit is mentioned, by my count, 15 times in chapter 8; the Son is mentioned 14 times in chapter 8; and the Father is mentioned 18 times in chapter 8. You see, the point is larger than the work of one person of the Trinity. Paul's point here is that

our security and our eternal safety rest in the blessings that come to us, not from a single member of the Trinity, but from all of the persons of the Trinity. In Romans 8 Paul teaches us that our salvation is secure, that our eternity is assured for seven amazing reasons, the reasons that I just gave to you in outline form. Today, we begin our study of the first of those reasons.

If you're a Christian, if you have repented and believed in Jesus Christ, you enjoy absolute security in the person of God; reason number one, because God has delivered us from condemnation. We find this explained in the first four verses of this wonderful chapter. Let's read them together, Romans 8:1 - 4:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

As Paul begins to drive home this theme of our security, he begins by declaring that for the one who believes in Jesus Christ, the condemnation of God's Law is gone forever. That's the point that he's making in these four verses, and he develops that point in two ways. In verse 1, he declares the reality of no condemnation, and then in verses 2 - 4, he explains the reason for no condemnation.

This morning, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table, I want us just to focus on the first verse and on the reality of no condemnation. Look at verse 1, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Look at it again; read it as though you had never read it before, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Lloyd Jones says, "This is one of the greatest statements of the Scripture, one of the most important for Christian experience and for the health and well-being of the believer." In fact, he says, "it is the heart and soul of the Christian gospel." Now if you have been a Christian any time at all, you know this verse; you've memorized this verse; you recite this verse to yourself as a point of encouragement and rightly so as we will see.

But before we consider exactly what Paul meant here, I first want to step back and make sure that we understand what Paul did not mean because there are some wrong ideas out there. Let

me just make sure you know what he did not mean. First of all, Paul did not mean, by what he says in verse 1, that the believer's sin isn't serious. He's not saying, "Well there's no condemnation, so don't worry about it; do whatever you want." No, it's very serious; Hebrews 12:6 says, "... THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." Where there is unrepentant sin, it's serious, and the Father will deal with it as a father disciplines his children. So, sin is still serious.

Secondly, Paul does not mean that the believer's sanctification isn't a priority. He's not saying, "Look, there's no condemnation, so just enjoy the reality of the forgiveness you have, and don't worry about all those imperatives; don't worry about all the pursuit of holiness." No, listen again to Hebrews 12:14, right after that passage about the discipline of the Lord we read this, "Pursue ... the sanctification ..." [Notice that word "pursue".] "pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." No, sanctification still matters; that's not what Paul is saying here.

Thirdly, Paul does not mean that the believer's future judgment is no longer a reality. He's not saying there's no Bema, there's no Judgment Seat of Christ; in fact, listen to 2 Corinthians 5:10, the same apostle says, speaking of believers, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Probably a better translation would be, "whether good or worthless." So, we will stand before Christ, and we will give an account for how we have used our lives here after we came to faith in Christ.

So, what does Paul mean then? If he doesn't mean those things, what does he mean in this magnificent text? Well, let me take you back and remind you of where we've been because to really understand this verse, you've got to have something else in the back of your mind. You have to have a backdrop, the backdrop that Paul has already drawn. Paul has already made it clear in the book of Romans that every single human being, you included, myself included, every human being stands before God in a dangerous position by nature and by birth.

Go back to Romans 3; Paul indicts all of humanity in the first three chapters of Romans. He starts with pagans who don't claim to worship the true God, who worship idols. Then he goes in chapter 2 to those who claim to worship the true God represented by the Jewish people that he confronts in chapter 2, and he indicts them. And then in chapter 3, he comes, and he backs up to all of humanity, and he indicts all of us together. And in chapter 3:19 and 20, here is his summary of all that he has spelled out about mankind. "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who were under the Law. Notice, by the way, the legal terminology here;

that's very important to where we're going. "Whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who were under the Law."

Now, we discovered in the early chapters of Romans, that's everybody; everybody's under the Law. There are some who are under the written Law. They have the Scripture. There are others who are under the substance of the law written on the human soul, talked about in chapter 2. So, who is under the Law? Every one of us, every human being; "whatever the Law says, it speaks of those who are under the Law." You know God's Law "so that, [Here is why the Law speaks.] "every mouth may be closed." You know what that means? God has given us His written Law, He's written the substance of His Law on every human soul so that at the judgment, not one person will have a word to say. Everyone will put their hand over their mouth and have nothing to say. You can't say, "But God, I didn't...." No!

And then he says, "and all the world may become accountable to God." That is, guilty before God because "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." God's Law showed us all how guilty we are. You see, that's Paul's summary of the first three chapters, and here's the basic point he's making. Without Christ we all are condemned, condemned!

Now, we use this word condemned, and we understand it in a couple of contexts. For example, we use this word of someone who is guilty of breaking the laws of the nation or the state of Texas. We describe that person as a "condemned criminal". What do we mean when we say that, speaking of a condemned criminal? You're talking about somebody who has been found guilty of breaking the law, of committing a crime, who has received the sentence, that is the prescribed penalty for breaking that specific law, and all that remains is the execution of the sentence; there's a condemned criminal. What Paul wants us to know is that, before the court room of God or in the courtroom of God, before the throne of God, we all are condemned like that, found guilty, verdict has been reached, the sentences been passed, the penalty has been stated, and all that remains is the carrying out of that penalty.

We also use this terminology of a building. We speak of a building being condemned. What do we mean by that? Well we mean that it's been found legally unsafe and it has been marked, destined for destruction. Folks, what I want to understand is that is exactly what Paul is saying, all mankind stands condemned in those senses before God. In fact, let me make it more personal because the Scripture makes it this personal. If you're here this morning, and as you sit in your seat there, you have never repented of your sins, you have never put your faith in Jesus Christ,

then you sit here this morning and as God sees you, and this isn't pretense, this is reality; as God sees you, He sees you condemned, a condemned criminal. That's what John says, John the Apostle. John says, "The one who has not believed in his son [John 3] is condemned already," is judged already. Listen, you don't have to wait to know how your verdict is going to turn out. If you haven't repented and believed in Jesus, as you sit here this morning, you are condemned. All that remains is the carrying out of the sentence. And someday that will happen; in our case as human beings, the penalty for breaking God's law, for rebelling against the King about whom we sang this morning, is eternal suffering in a place that Jesus called hell.

Now Scripture teaches that God condemned each of us; that we are condemned by God for three reasons. First of all, we are condemned because of the guilt we inherited from Adam by imputation. He stood in our place in the garden, he acted on our behalf and God said, "Guilty to Adam and guilty to everyone he represents." You are guilty by reason of Adam's sin, and I am as well.

Secondly, the Scripture says that we have been condemned by God because of the sinful nature that we received by natural generation from our parents. We were born in sin as David puts it. Even before we committed sin, we were born in sin because our sinful nature is in and of itself worthy of God's condemnation. It's an offense against His holy character.

But there's a third reason God has condemned us and that is because of our own sin. You and I are all condemned before God because of our sins of thought and attitude and words and actions: condemned. Just as truly as a building has been marked condemned, God has marked everyone who's born into this world "condemned". That is the Biblical and theological context in which Paul makes this staggering statement in Romans 8:1.

Look at it again, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Now what does that mean, and what are the practical implications of it? Well this one simple stunning verse holds several key insights into the incredible reality that for us as believers in Jesus Christ, there is now no condemnation. Let's look at those insights together.

The first insight that we learn here comes by way of a logical connection, a logical connection. And it's encompassed in the word "therefore, therefore". As you know that's a very familiar word; the Apostle Paul loves it. It's a word that introduces a logical or practical conclusion from what he said before. In light of what I said, "therefore, here is the logical conclusion."

Now the question is when we look at verse 1, what is this statement, the logical conclusion of? Is it the logical conclusion of chapter 7? You know chapter 7 is about the law. Is it because of how the law works? Is it true that there is therefore now no condemnation? Well, that doesn't fit very well. What about the second half of Romans 7 where it talks about our ongoing struggle as believers with sin? Is that the logical connection? Well, that doesn't fit either. How is "no condemnation" the logical conclusion of our ongoing struggle with sin? Okay, you struggle with sin, believer, in an ongoing way; therefore there is now no condemnation. That doesn't connect logically.

Well, we can make the right connection if we remember, and I know you have to go back a little ways to remember this, but if we remember that chapters 6 and 7 are digressions from Paul's main argument. In fact, look back in Romans 5. In Romans 5:20, Paul made two controversial statements. The first one is in verse 20, "when sin increases, grace abounds even more." Now immediately when Paul says that, he realizes somebody could misunderstand that, somebody could think, "Well then, I should just sin more." And so, because of that, because of the potential misunderstanding in chapter 6, Paul interrupts himself and his main argument to address the believer's relationship to sin, and he says, "No, you can't go on sinning. You're no longer a slave to sin; you've been changed; your relationship to sin has changed."

Back in 5:20, he makes another controversial statement, a second controversial statement. He says the Law was added to increase the transgression, and if that wasn't bad enough look down 6:14. He says, "you are ... [no longer] under [the] law but under grace."

Wait a minute Paul, lots of potential misunderstanding there. And Paul realizes that; and so, in chapter 7, he interrupts the flow of his primary argument a second time to address the believer's relationship to the law. We could put it this way, although chapters 6 and 7 are absolutely crucial for us to understand, you can actually pull them out, remove them from the book of Romans without upsetting the logical flow of the apostle's primary argument. And that is actually what Paul does when he comes to chapter 8.

As he begins chapter 8, he skips back over chapters 6 and 7 and summarizes what he had been saying in chapter 5 before he interrupted himself. So, we could put it this way, in a general sense, chapter 8, and particularly the statement we're looking at this morning, is a logical conclusion of everything Paul taught in the first five chapters of this letter.

You remember what he has taught us so far. Beginning after the introduction in 1:1 - 17, beginning in 1:18 and running all the way through 3:20, we saw the end of that section, the sort of summary of that section, in 3:19 - 20. And it's about our condemnation, "Condemned," that's what the first three chapters through the half of chapter 3, that's what it says, "Condemned." It's about our condemnation.

But beginning in 3:21, and running to the end of chapter 5, it's about our justification, "Justified." When you come to 8:1, it is a summary statement of all of that. It's the gospel in a nutshell, for there is therefore "now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." But primarily, when you look at the word "therefore" in Romans 8:1, you have to understand that it connects back logically primarily to the end of chapter 5. Go back to chapter 5 for a moment. You remember here Paul begins in the first 11 verses of chapter 5 talking about the immediate benefits of our justification. Look at verse 1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith." He says, "You've been justified; let me tell you the benefits of that," beginning of course, with the fact that we have peace with God, and then he details other amazing benefits that come out of our justification.

Then, the second half of chapter 5, beginning in verse 12 and running down through verse 21, Paul addresses the legal basis for justification. He answers the question, "How could a holy, righteous judge declare wicked people to be righteous?" Isn't God violating His own rules about judging? The second half of chapter 5 answers that question. It answers it by saying the legal basis for our justification (how God can do that and still be just) is because we are in Christ.

Now, in that context, in the second half of chapter 5, we find the only other times in the book of Romans that Paul uses that word 'condemnation.' Look at 5:16, "The gift (That is the gift of grace, the end of verse 15, it comes through Christ.) the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned, (or like that which came through Adam) for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression (Here it is.) resulting in condemnation." We were in Adam; and when Adam sinned, we got condemnation. But on the other hand, the free gift that comes from Christ arose from many transgressions and results in justification. Verse 18, "So then as through one transgression (Adam's sin) there resulted condemnation to all men." Condemned, you're condemned because of what Adam did in your place. You were in Adam, and he was your representative, and you get the consequences of his choice, condemned.

Verse 18 says, "even so." In the same way that worked, "even so through one act of righteousness, [That is the perfect life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.] there resulted

justification of life to all men.” Not to all people indiscriminately, but to all those who are in Christ as we were once in Adam.

So, understand what Paul’s doing. He concludes chapter 5 with the idea that there is no condemnation for believers. Why? Because, we are in Christ! Now go back to 8:1. You see immediately the connection, “Therefore,” because of all our legal representative has done, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That is just a summary statement of what he’s been talking about at the end of chapter 5. That’s the logical connection.

But there’s a second insight in verse 1 about this change; let’s call it our legal status, our legal status. No condemnation, “there is now no condemnation.” First, take that word “now”. It’s a word Paul loves, and he uses it often in this letter to distinguish our lives before Christ from our lives after Christ. He uses it to talk about what happened to move us from B.C. in our personal lives to A.D.

Let me show you (I won’t show you all the examples). I’ll just show you a couple. Look at chapter 5, and notice verse 9, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of *God* through Him.” Did you see it? Now, “having now been justified by His blood,” A.D. This is what has happened after you came to Christ. Verse 11, “And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” You see how the word “now” marks the change from your life B.C. to your life A.D.

That’s exactly what he’s doing in 8:1. Go back there. There are other examples, by the way; but in interest of time, just go back to chapter 8. When Paul uses the word “now” in verse 1, he is describing our present spiritual position and our position from the moment that we are justified. “Now,” this is what happened as a result of a radical event that happened in heaven’s courtroom, our justification. There was a complete reversal of our legal status. “There is now no condemnation.” What Paul wants you to see is that the legal verdict on you is not out; the jury isn’t still deliberating; the verdict is in, and the verdict is “righteous”. “There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

But now I want you to look at those two, magnificent, profound, encouraging words at the heart of this statement in verse 1, “no condemnation, no condemnation.” What do they mean? Well let’s take “condemnation” first. Condemnation comes straight from the courtroom. This word is

used, it's the opposite of justification; you saw it back in chapter 5, right? The judge, sitting behind his bench, can make one of two decisions. He can make a decision of condemnation, or he can make a decision of justification; that's it. There's no middle ground, no gray; justified or condemned, justified or condemned.

"Condemnation," the leading Greek lexicon defines it this way, "as a judicial pronouncement upon a guilty person. It includes condemnation," we could say verdict, "and punishment." So, let me summarize what it means to be condemned. This is important; if there's "no condemnation," you need to understand what is. Condemnation, to be condemned then, is two things. To be condemned, number one, is to receive a verdict of guilty; and to be condemned, number two, is to be sentenced for the penalty that crime demands. It's both. It's the verdict and it's the penalty: condemnation.

Now do you see what Paul is saying here? He says, for the sinner, the guilty one who has been justified by God through the work of Christ, "There is ... no condemnation," there is no verdict of guilty, and there is no penalty. Paul, by the way, isn't saying this for the first time. He has said this very same thing throughout this letter in different ways. Let me show you a couple. Look back at chapter 1; 1:16, even as he states the theme of this letter, he says it, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it, [the gospel] is the power of God [Notice what he says] for salvation." Salvation from what? Rescue from what? ... from the penalty that the law brings for having broken it, salvation to everyone who believes.

Look over in chapter 3; when Paul begins to explain the gospel, he says in verse 23, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." There's the condemnation; there's the bad news he's spent the first three chapters talking about; and then he says but those sinners are justified, declared right with God, given a right standing before God "as a gift by His grace." But how could He do that? "Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;" through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Look at 4:7. "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN," as he quotes David here. Psalm 32, and "Whose sin(s have been) ... covered." Now watch verse 8, "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." Blessed is the man over whom the judge doesn't say, "Condemned."

Go over to 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's not talking about a feeling of peace; that's talking about objective

peace. The war between myself and God is over, peace with God. And as we saw, verses 16 and 18 also talk about the very same thing here in chapter 5.

Now when you come then to 8:1, Paul comes back to this same theme again and simply says it in a different way. “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” No guilty verdict, no penalty.

Now look at that word “no”, N O. It’s a great word, little two letter word that is huge. What’s interesting is in the Greek text of Romans 8, the very first word is this word “no,” NO! Paul begins. “No condemnation for ... [the one who is] in Christ Jesus.” He does it as a point of emphasis. He’s driving this home to us. The word “no,” by the way, the specific Greek word that used means “not any”. For the believer, there is not any condemnation. God will not, indeed God cannot ever pronounce you guilty in the courtroom of His justice. And there is no sentence of divine justice hanging like the sword of Damocles over your head, ready to fall at any moment, and there never will be. No verdict of guilty and no sentence of hell, no condemnation.

Now, sadly, many Christians really fail to understand this. I have to tell you honestly, I didn’t get this for a number of years after I became a Christian because there are some bad ideas out there. Some of it’s taught; some of it’s sort of caught as you develop in your own thinking, the wrong theological ideas about this construct. Let me just give you, for a moment, a few of the common, but bad theological ideas that rob us of the joy of Romans 8:1. See if you’ve been captured by some of these bad theological ideas.

Bad idea number one, wrong, flawed, un-biblical idea number one: At salvation, God only forgave the sins we committed before salvation. You know, we kind of get it in our head, you know, I’ve lived a life of sin, and I’ve come to Christ, I’ve asked Him to forgive my sin, and so my past slate is wiped clean. Thank God! And we glory in that. And then, we sin; like uh oh, what just happened, and what does this mean? And we begin to think, “Well, you know, maybe at salvation, my sins in the past were forgiven, but now I’m in trouble.” No, listen!

Let me ask you a question. When Jesus died on the cross, how many of your sins for which he died were in the past? This is not a trick question. The Scriptures teach that when Jesus died on the cross, He died for every sin, past, present, and future of every person who would ever believe in Him; and at the moment of salvation, that was applied to you. When you were forgiven, you

were forgiven at the moment of salvation of every sin that you ever have committed, that you are committing, or that you will commit. That's what the gospel teaches.

Bad idea number two: As Christians, we are condemned when we sin until we ask God for forgiveness. In other words, it's kind of carrying on the same idea, "Well, okay, I was forgiven at the moment of salvation and I'm not condemned. Uh oh, I just sinned again; until I deal with that, you know, today's communion, and we're going to take communion together, I confess all my sins, I'm good; I'm not condemned. But then I leave here and tomorrow I sin, what happens? Maybe, maybe I'm condemned again." No! That's not what the Scriptures teach. This view assumes you sort of go back and forth between a state of condemnation and no condemnation.

How do you think about this? You know, a lot of people get confused because, "I asked for forgiveness at salvation, but then the Bible says, "I sin as a believer, I'm supposed to ask for forgiveness. So maybe that means I'm still condemned in some way." No! Here's how you need to think of it. This is how my own heart came to understand the truth of Scripture and where I find my peace and comfort and confidence, and you'll see this, I think, in just a moment. Before salvation, well, let me back up and say it this way.

Think of two rooms, okay, two rooms. Before salvation, what room are you in? You're in the courtroom; you're in the courtroom of God's justice; and every time you sin, the gavel comes down, "Condemned, Condemned, Condemned!" And when you come to faith in Christ, and you come before the judge, and you humble yourself; and because of the work of Jesus Christ, you ask Him to forgive your sin and declare you righteous with the righteousness of Jesus Christ ... the final gavel comes down and God says, "Righteous!" And you leave the courtroom, and you will never be back in that courtroom again because the Judge, the final Judge has made the ultimate decision about your case, and He has said, "Righteous!" So, you leave the courtroom; you never, for the rest of your life as a Christian, go back into the courtroom of God's justice.

But what happened is when the Judge stepped out from His bench, He put his arm around you, and said, "I'm going to adopt you; you're coming home with Me." And now you're in a second room. Now that you're a believer, you're no longer in the courtroom of God's justice; you're in the Father's house as an adopted child. And so, what happens when you sin as a Christian? You don't go back to the courtroom; you don't go back to the Judge and say, "Forgive me legally." No! The gavel already came down. He said, "Righteous with the righteousness of Jesus Christ." What do you do? You go to your Father at home; it's not a legal issue; this is a relational issue

when you sin as a Christian. You go to your Father and you say, “Father, I’ve shamed the family name; I’ve disappointed you; I’ve sinned against your goodness; forgive me.” Before Christ, it’s forgiveness in the courtroom of God’s justice; after Christ, it’s forgiveness of the Father. It’s a bad idea, this idea, “we’re condemned when we sin.”

Bad idea number three: There is punishment after death for our sins. This usually isn’t defined except in Roman Catholicism where you have purgatory; but for Protestant people, it just sort of sneaks in in this sort of fuzzy, unformed, unshaped way. There is sort of this foreboding sense that I’m going to face God’s punishment after death. That is an absolute contradiction of Romans 8:1, There is “therefore ... now no condemnation (to) those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Related to that, bad idea number four: We will be judged for our sins at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Notice the keywords, “for our sins.” We will be judged at the judgment Seat of Christ, but not for our sins. The New Testament is clear that the future judgment of Christians will be about reward, not punishment for our sins. Let me give you a verse that makes this very clear. If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a participant in the New Covenant according to Hebrews; the New Covenant that God made with you that has promises and here’s one of the promises. Hebrews 10:17, “THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER (What?) NO MORE.” God has promised you, believer, that He will not bring your sins up against you again forever, and He’s not going to break that promise. Is He faithful? Is He trustworthy? Has He ever lied? No, that’s His promise.

So, what’s God’s response to all of that bad theology? “There is (therefore) ... now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” By the way, the word, “no,” you could really say, “never.” This is not merely our present condition. This is our permanent position. We are forever beyond the reach of condemnation. I love the way Jesus says it in John 5:24, listen to this. By the way, He’s just said the Father has given Me all right to judge, and now He’s going to tell us who’s going to be judged and who isn’t. Chapter 5 of John, verse 24, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life....” Have you heard the word of Christ? Have you repented and believed in Him? Then Jesus says this, he “has eternal life.” And listen to this, “and does not come into judgment....” Jesus says, I am the Judge, and if you have repented and believed in Me, you will not ever come into judgment; not condemned and never can be condemned.

By the way, this is true even with human justices, isn’t it? I mean, if a criminal is convicted in the US and receives the death penalty, he can appeal that verdict. But as long as he’s in that

appeal process, he knows that it's possible his guilty verdict will be upheld, and he will be eventually executed. However, once his case gets to the Supreme Court, if the Supreme Court reverses his verdict to not guilty, then he no longer has any reason for fear or concern. Why? Because, there's no possibility of condemnation, because the highest court in the land has rendered its verdict; there's no higher authority that can reinstate that guilty verdict. Folks, that's exactly how it is with us.

If the only Lawgiver and Judge in the universe, if the one who is, by Himself, the Supreme Court of the universe, if He justifies us, then who can ever declare us guilty and condemned? There is no higher court to which the case can be appealed. Paul makes this very point down in 8:33, he says,

Who will bring a charge [that sticks, who can make a charge stick] against God's elect? [since] God is the one who ... [has justified; who has declared you righteous. Where's that appeal going to go? Verse 34,] who is the one who ... [can condemn you?] [Who is the one who can say, "Guilty and here's the penalty!] [If Jesus] Christ ... [was the one] who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. [There is "therefore ... now no condemnation."]

There's a third and final insight in this verse: It's the special beneficiaries. Not everybody can be said to have "no condemnation." It's only, verse 1 says, "for those who are in Christ Jesus." There, Paul identifies both those who are free from condemnation and why they're free from condemnation. He says "those ... in Christ." Well, elsewhere Paul calls all believers, refers to all believers as those "in Christ". I have a string of references in my notes, but it's a point that doesn't need to be proved. So, if you are a Christian, you are "in Christ Jesus." What does that mean? Well, remember he explained it back at the end of chapter 5.

He contrasted your being "in Christ now" with your having been "in Adam" before your salvation. In the garden, God appointed Adam to be your legal representative. He acted on your behalf, and you got the consequences for his sinful actions. In the very same way, to be "in Christ" means that if you believe in His Son, God has appointed Christ as your legal representative, and you get all the benefits of Christ's actions, the blessings of His perfect life and of His substitutionary death.

In fact, listen closely; there is only one way that condemned sinners like us can ever get rid of our condemnation. It's through our legal representative and what He has done for us. What changed our verdict from "condemnation" to "no condemnation" was that the Father condemned Jesus in our place.

Look at 8:3; this is exactly what Paul says. We'll look at in more detail, Lord-willing, next week. He says, "what the Law could not do, weak as it was through [our own sinful] flesh, God *did*." What did God do? He sent "... His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, [That's just like us, but without sin.] and *as an offering* [or as a sacrifice] for sin." [And when God did that, notice what God did, God] "... condemned sin in the flesh."

You know what Paul is saying? You get the "no condemnation" verdict because Jesus got the "condemned" verdict. The reason that God can say to you, "There is no condemnation," is because, on the cross, He imputed, he credited, your sins to Christ, and He said to Christ, "Condemned! You're going to die for the sins that he committed, that she committed." That's the gospel. If you are in Christ, and if you're Christian, you are, "There is ... no condemnation."

I have to share this quote with you from Lloyd-Jones. This is the practical application. What you do with this day-to-day? Lloyd Jones says:

Never allow yourself to go, even in thought, under condemnation again. In fact, that is to sin because it is a failure to believe the Word of God. Answer the accuser, the devil, with Romans 8. Tell him that you know what you've done, that you have grieved your Lord and disappointed Him, but that you also know that it has nothing to do with law and that, "Therefore there is ... no condemnation." You are like a child who has sinned against his parents, and you know what to do and to whom to go. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

And folks, this verdict doesn't change. The status of "no condemnation" can never change. Look down at 8:38; I love this. Paul says:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life [in other words, nothing that can happen in this life nor death itself, nor outside powers]) ... angels ... principalities, [powers] nor things present, [That's right now.] nor things to come, [That's everything yet to happen.] ... nor height, nor depth, nor any other created

thing, [in other words, nothing in the universe will be able] to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you see what Paul does? He book ends this chapter. He begins by saying “no condemnation” and he ends by saying “no separation.” Nothing can change that “no condemnation” verdict because nothing can separate you from the love of God that has been set on you. It’s this fact that the Father condemned Jesus in our place at the cross. It allows us to have “no condemnation!” It’s this fact that is central in our celebration of the Lord’s Table. Take a moment to prepare your hearts as the men come.

Our Father, we thank you for Your grace to us in Christ. Thank you that we have no condemnation because He was condemned by You. Lord, help us to live in the light of these truths, to think about them, to meditate on them, to rehearse and remind ourselves, to preach to ourselves, and to glory in our Lord Jesus Christ, condemned like we deserved to be so that we could know no condemnation. We love you. We thank you for your love.

In Jesus’s name, Amen.