

18. No condemnation

August 10, 2008

Her hair was a mess, her clothes was torn in several places by rough hands. She was holding it tight around herself as she was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem faster than her feet could keep up with and tossed in front of this young rabbi from Galilee like a ragged doll. She had probably been used and abused all her life by men. And now they were demanding her execution.

Of course, I'm speaking of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11. Her accusers could only see a woman who was living an immoral lifestyle. Jesus could only see a woman forgiven of her sins. And with one statement from Jesus, her accusers departed. There she was, looking into the very eyes of holy and righteous God. Talking about a stark comparison: The Holy Son of God and a sinful woman. Instead of seeing scorn and hatred, she saw love and compassion as Jesus uttered the words:

John 8:10-11 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

How could Jesus say such a thing to an adulterous woman? He could make such a revolutionary statement because, in a short time, He was going to the cross where the world's sins that includes yours and mine would be poured upon Him. He would soon bear every sin that this woman had ever committed. Jesus was proclaiming this truth: "I will not condemn you, because I am going to face the condemnation that you should face. I am going to pay the price for your sin."

Notice that He did not say, "Go and sin no more and, as a result, I will not condemn you." If that were the case, no one could be forgiven. We don't seek to live godly lives in order to win God's approval and forgiveness. If we believe in Him, He will accept us no matter what we have done. He will throw His arms around us and receive us. But God doesn't stop there. He also wants to change us.

Jesus' act of forgiveness was followed by a challenge. "Go and sin no more."

A. NO CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

V1 begins with the term 'therefore', which tells us that we need to understand the previous section in order to fully appreciate what Paul is about to say. In chapter 7, he described the battle with the sin nature, a struggle which led him to cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" We all can relate to Paul's exasperation. We all struggle against sin.

Late Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day.

No matter how hard we try to live like spiritual people, our old nature seems to be right in our face at nearly every turn. It is easy to feel condemned by satan and ourselves because of our own shortcomings.

Martin Luther said once, "If I have to be stranded in a remote island and I can have one chapter of the Bible, I would choose chapter 8 of Romans." As Luther said, it is an absolutely phenomenal chapter that packs all the right things we need our walk with Christ.

Few passages in the Bible match the power and passion expressed here by Paul. And few sections of Scripture surpass Romans 8 in revealing the awesome ministry of the Holy Spirit. Up to this point, the Holy Spirit was mentioned 4 times in this Book. But in chapter 8 alone we can find the Holy Spirit mentioned 19 times.

The simple declaration of no condemnation comes to those who are in Christ Jesus. Since the Father does not condemn Jesus, neither can He condemn those who are in Him. The verdict is not "less condemnation." That's where many of us are at – we think that our standing has improved in Jesus. It hasn't improved, it's been completely transformed, changed from guilty to no condemnation.

Even though we will continue to struggle against our sin nature – and sometimes even lose that battle – we will never receive everlasting punishment for our failures.

By the way, Romans 8 begins with no condemnation. It ends with no separation, and in between there is no defeat. Cool, huh?

If you have NIV and NASB, you should have noticed that you don't have a phrase "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit". What happened? Is this place where the Bible contradicts? No, these words are not found in the earliest ancient manuscripts of the Book of Romans and they do not agree with the flow of Paul's context here. They were probably added by a copyist who either made a mistake or thought he could "help" Paul by bringing in these words from Romans 8:4.

I asked you to underline the word "in" before 'Christ'. This particular word is like a small key that unlocks a large room door that is filled with uncountable treasure.

If you are not a born-again Christian, you are not in Christ. If you are not in Christ, you will not go to heaven, never, never, never. You might say, "That is rude to say that to the people who might have different beliefs than yours." No, I am just repeating what Jesus said to an extremely religious man Nicodemus in John 3:3. That is the truth and truth is not an easy pill to swallow.

Before we cover the rest of chapter 8, I believe that we need to go over some of the terms we will come across and even already have:

In Christ	Without Christ
Born-again	Not born-again (unbeliever)
Spiritually minded	Carnally minded
Spiritual	Flesh
Walk in the Spirit	Walk in flesh
New nature	Old nature
New Man	Old man

Not Condemned
Saint

Condemned
Ain't

B. SETTING US FREE FROM SIN AND DEATH

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The law of the sin and death was a strong and seemingly absolute law. Every sin we commit and every cemetery we see is the proof of it.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ is much more powerful to set us free.

V1 tells us we are free from the guilt of sin and v2 tells us we are free from the power of sin. That is not the only thing you are going to get. If you call right now and order it, we will also send you a Shinju Kitchen knife at no extra charge. Sorry, one too many infomercial I watched.

Like a cruel slave master, the law of sin and death still rules every unbeliever completely. It permeates everything they do. But when they trust in Jesus Christ, the shackles fall off and believers are set free from their bondages.

It seems like almost every salvation testimony includes a phrase similar to this one: "I felt like a heavy weight had been lifted off my shoulders." No wonder so many Christians weep when they reach this part of their testimony! What an empowering experience to finally say "No!" to the flesh and "Yes!" to the grace of God!

C. THE DIVINE RESCUE OPERATION

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Law could not save humans. It can only condemn. God sent His Son to save us and do what the Law could not do. Jesus did not come as an angel. He came as a man. He did not come "in sinful flesh," because that would have made Him a sinner. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, as a man. He bore our sins in His body on the cross.

Some of you may wonder how Jesus could be the substitution for mankind's sin. To learn this we need to go back to the future.

Revelation 5:1-5 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. 5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

This scene will happen in heaven while the first part of the seven year Great Tribulation is happening on earth.

The average scrolls in John's day were made of eight-by-ten-inch sheets of papyrus, and they were connected horizontally and wound around a wooden handle. But we see here a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals, which can be perplexing until one studies Jewish history. This means that this scroll is unusual. It wasn't common practice to write on both sides of the scroll. However we find numerous examples of a certain kind of document with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals: a title deed to a piece of property.

Initially, a title deed would be written only on the smooth side and sealed with a single seal. But if the owner became unable to meet his financial obligations, he would have to relinquish his title deed – upon the backside of which would be written his debts and upon which would be placed seven seals. If at any time during the ensuing seven years he could pay off his debts, the seals would be broken and the title deed returned.

All of this explains what is in the hand of the One who sits on the throne here in chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation. It's the title deed to planet earth. The title deed to this planet was originally given to Adam in the Garden of Eden when God told him to subdue the earth according to Genesis 1:28. But Adam forfeited his right to ownership when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You see, although Eve was tricked into eating the forbidden fruit, Adam's was an overt, a calculated act of rebellion, which is why the Bible speaks of Adam's sin as that which transferred to satan the title deed of our planet. This explains why apostle Paul called satan the god of this world.

Remember the emphasis is not on the content of the scroll, but on the One who is worthy to take and open it.

As we can see in v2-4 of chapter 5, no one was worthy enough to open the scroll. Alexander the Great was willing. Genghis Khan was willing. Mohammed was willing. Napoleon was willing. Hitler was willing. There have been lots of people who have said, "I want to be in power. Give me a crack at it. Let me see what I can do." But the angel doesn't ask, "Who is willing?" The angel asks, "Who is worthy?" It has to be the one who is only willing, but also sinless and human. Angels could not do it, since they don't need salvation through redemption. I believe that it narrows down very much the qualification of the person who can open the scroll.

When no one comes forward to reclaim earth's title deed, John is overcome with grief when he realizes the people on earth would remain in satan's grasp forever.

According to the law that was given to the Israelites from Lev 25, we find that in redeeming the land, there had to be three qualifications to be met. If the original seller could not purchase the land back, one of his relatives can try it. That relative had to have money to buy the land back and willing, not by force.

We find a great example of this in the Book of Ruth. The kinsman redeemer Boaz did this for Ruth and Naomi.

When we put this in light of salvation through redemption aspect, we can clearly see how the Savior Jesus Christ comes into the picture:
No man could purchase this earth back from satan, because there is no human who was sinless. None of us are qualified. Angels could not purchase the earth deed

from satan, either, because they are not related to us. It had to be someone that has a human body, yet completely sinless. God took a form of humanity by putting aside His glory and made Himself lower than an angel becoming a human. In addition to that, throughout His earthly life, He did not sin against God's commands. At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus cried out to the Father in heaven to allow the cup of the curse of men to pass by Him. But He willingly took our curse upon Himself by allowing Himself to be crucified.

By being a fellow human, Jesus met the first qualification, by being a perfect God without sin, He met the second qualification and by willingly taking our curses upon Himself on the cross, He met the third qualification. Now, the deed is in the hands of God the Father.

The law is fulfilled in us in regard to obedience, because Jesus righteousness stands for ours. The law is fulfilled in us in regard to punishment, because any punishment demanded by the law was poured out upon Jesus.

D. APPLICATION

As I've mentioned at the beginning of this study, Jesus' act of forgiveness is followed by a challenge to all of us.

God knows that our behaviors don't always match our position, and that is why Scripture constantly encourages us to "walk by the Spirit", to live in a manner worthy of our new position in Christ.

Galatians 5:16-17 Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.