

No Condemnation

Romans 8:1

Pastor John Miller

I'm going to read Romans 8:1-4, and then we're going to come back and look at verse 1.

Paul says in Romans 8, "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. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 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, 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."

Romans 8 is one of the greatest and most loved chapters in the entire Bible. Many great Bible scholars call Romans 8 the greatest chapter in the Bible. Someone once described it as if the Bible were a ring. Romans 8 would be the diamond setting right in the center of that ring. It's the sparkling jewel of our preservation in Christ. We all know some of the great verses from Romans 8. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." How about Romans 8:39? It says that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We love this chapter, and we're going to soak in it for the next many weeks to learn how we are safe in the arms of Jesus. The chapter opens in verse 1 with "no condemnation...in Christ," and it ends in verse 39 with no separation "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I believe that an understanding and application of the truths found in Romans 8 will transform your Christian life. God's Spirit working through God's Word and these important truths, there will be a revolutionary change in your life to know that you are safe in the arms of Jesus, that the Spirit has come to control your life and that you can fulfill the demands of the law.

Now I need to introduce this text in light of the book of Romans. I want you to notice that in Christ, we have a new assurance of victory, Romans 8, verses 1-13; we have a new assurance of sonship, verses 14-17; we have a new assurance of hope, verses 18-25; we have a new assurance of help, verses 26-30. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, even interceding for us in prayer. Then fifthly and lastly, in Romans 8:31-39, we have a new assurance of security; we are kept by the power of God unto the day of redemption. There's no condemnation, there's no separation, and in between, there's no defeat.

Our focus in this series will be on the believer's blessed assurance in Christ. Blessed assurance is for all those who are in Christ. Someone described Romans 8 as, "God is for you, Christ is around you and the Spirit is in you." I like that. Paul cries, "If God be for you, who can

be against you?”

Now I want to look at the first of the blessed assurances. It's found in Romans 8:1: No condemnation. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Quite often, people ask me, “What translation are you reading from?” I use the King James, the authorized version. Not the New King James version. In my Bible, verse 1 continues, “...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” I intentionally didn't read that. Why? Because in the older manuscripts, it is omitted from verse 1. But it is included in verse 4, where it fits more correctly. At the end of verse 4, it says, “...who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” I don't believe it belongs in verse 1. What is it doing there? It's an interpolation. It was accidentally put in there by a scribe. We know from the manuscripts that this is the case. You can trust your Bible, because we have a multitude of manuscript evidence to determine what verses go where. It's not in question. We know that it's in verse 4, but it's questionable in verse 1. If it is in verse 1, I believe it almost contradicts what's being said there—that in Christ, there is no condemnation.

There is no condition for “no condemnation,” other than being in Christ. It's not saying that God won't condemn you as long as you're walking in the Spirit. It's saying that God won't condemn you, because you are in Christ. That's very important to understand. If you are in Christ, there's no condemnation, so I think that verse 1 would read like this: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Let's unpack verse 1 by looking at four important words or phrases. I'm slowing down today to a snail's pace. I don't normally preach from just one verse. I want to explain what these four words or phrases mean.

The first word I want to discuss is the word “therefore.” “There is therefore now no condemnation....” The word “therefore” indicates that Paul is summing up what has gone before. Now the question is, how far back is the “therefore” there for? When you have a “therefore,” ask what it's there for.

It is there because from chapter 1 to chapter 7, Paul has been describing man's condemnation, his salvation and his sanctification. Now in chapter 8, Paul moves into his preservation. In chapter 1:18 to 3:20, mankind is under the wrath of God and under condemnation. Romans 3:19 says, “...all the world may become guilty before God.” That's the end of that first section. Every mouth is stopped. So we see the religious man, the Jewish man, the heathen man—everyone in the world—is condemned and guilty before God.

Then we see that Paul moves into the section called “salvation,” and that is how God saves sinners. The way God saves is in Christ Jesus. In 3:21 all the way through chapter 5, Paul talks about how God justifies the condemned. Justification is the opposite of condemnation. So we're first condemned, and now we're justified or declared righteous.

Then in chapters 6-7, moving up to chapter 8, we see the believer's sanctification.

Now in chapter 8, we have the believer's preservation.

Romans 8 is the summit or the mountain peak of Scripture. The book of Romans is Paul's theological last will and testament. He takes everything he knows of how God saves sinners from the Gospel, and he puts it into this marvelous book.

We haven't studied all of Romans; we're jumping into the midst of it in chapter 8. We move from condemnation to justification to sanctification to preservation, kept safe in Jesus Christ. God saves us in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus we are justified, we are sanctified and we are glorified.

Salvation has three tenses: past, present and future. We have been saved; we're justified and been declared righteous. This is our position in Christ. The present tense of salvation is that I'm being saved. This is sanctification. It's a process. So I've been justified. The word is "position"; my standing is complete in Christ. I'm being—present tense—sanctified. This is a process. Justification is not a process. It's complete the moment you are born again. Your standing will never change. You are righteous in Christ. But it then starts a life-long process of being sanctified or changed to be more like Jesus Christ. Then the third phase—this is the really good one we're looking for—is glorification. That's when we go to heaven, we're with Jesus and we get—praise God!—a new body. So we've been justified, we're being sanctified and one day, we will be glorified.

It's my conviction that when a person is justified, glorification is a sure thing. What begins in grace, ends in glory. Those who have been justified will be glorified, so don't fret, don't freak out, don't worry. "Am I going to make it to heaven? Am I just going to get in by the skin of my teeth?" You have been declared righteous in Christ. You're being made righteous in Christ. And one day you will be glorified in Christ.

Donald Gray Barnhouse said, "It is my measured opinion that confusing sanctification with justification is the cause of more false doctrine than any other error that has ever been committed by religious thinkers." I agree.

One of the problems so many Christians have is that they get saved, and because they're not perfect—because they falter, because they fall, because sometimes they stumble—they think that they've lost their salvation or that God's kicked them out of the family or they're not going to go to heaven or they have to work harder to try to stay saved. They think God is angry with them or mad at them. They fail to understand that they are positionally righteous before God and that is a settled fact.

But practically, no. All Christians have justification; there's no degree of being justified. But there are degrees of sanctification. Some of you are living a more holy, godly life. By the way, the words "saint," "sanctified" and "holy" all come from the same root word. It means to be "set apart and made holy." So some Christians live a more sanctified life; they've grown in their walk with the Lord. They're living a more Christ-like life. They're more Spirit filled. They're more like Jesus. Other Christians, you know, have a long way to go. Maybe you've been a

Christian for a long time, but you have a long way to go.

This sanctification is a process that will never end until we get to heaven. That's why it's positional, it's practical and then it's perfect. Justification is position, sanctification is practice and glorification is perfection. Perfection happens when I get a new body, I'm in Jesus' presence and I am glorified.

So Romans 8 is Paul's summary of how God saves sinners.

What I have just shared with you is foundational to understanding not only all of Romans 8, but also verse 1 of what it means to be in Christ with no condemnation. Verse 1 of Romans 8 is a summary not only of the whole of Romans 8, but of the whole of the book of Romans and of the whole Bible. It really summarizes how God saves sinners. He saves us in Christ Jesus.

Now when does the blessing of salvation come to us? Here is my second word in verse 1, and that is the word "now." It's a time word. It points to the change that comes into the life of a person who is justified in Christ.

You ask, "Pastor John, you're going to preach on 'therefore' and 'now'?"

"Yeah, that's what I'm doing."

"Therefore...now there is no condemnation." So when is there no condemnation? "Now." The moment a sinner is saved, there is no condemnation. Now we are justified. That happens the moment you believe and trust in Jesus Christ and are born again. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." So you were under condemnation, but now you are saved in Christ. So it is a believer's present possession. It means right now, and never will there be any condemnation.

The third word, or phrase in verse 1 is "no condemnation." So Paul starts with "therefore" and then "now" and moves to "no condemnation." The word "no" in the Greek is emphatic. We don't get that in English. When we say "no," it's just no. We have to kind of yell and scream and pound something for emphasis. But in the Greek, they had a couple of different words for "no." The word here for "no" is an emphatic "no." It means "No way, Hosea! Never! Ain't gonna happen!" Actually in the Greek, it would say, "No condemnation therefore to those who are in Christ Jesus." That's the way it would be transliterated into the Bible. "No!" for emphasis.

In the Greek, the first word in a sentence is always the emphatic. "No condemnation therefore to those who are in Christ Jesus." So Paul takes the wicked, sinful, lost, condemned human race and of those who are born again or placed in Christ, there is no condemnation—not now, not ever, not in the future. There will never be condemnation for the believers. That's a glorious, glorious truth.

In Romans 5:1, when Paul was talking about the blessings and benefits of being saved or

justified, he said, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So we have no condemnation because we're justified, and now we have peace with God, because we've been forgiven in Jesus Christ.

I want you to note that it says "no condemnation." It doesn't say "no sins." It doesn't say "no mistakes." It doesn't say there is "now therefore no stumbling of those who are in Christ." Why? Because we do stumble. As Christians, we still sin. If you say you don't sin, you're a liar, and "the truth is not in you," the Bible says. We do sin.

Jesus said that if you have anger in your heart toward someone, you've murdered them. Some of you murdered someone on the way to church today. "That idiot!" A little boy said, "Mommy, why is it that when Dad drives, all the idiots come out?" There are never any idiots when Mom's driving, just when Dad drives.

So we've all stumbled, we've all sinned. But that isn't what the verse says. It doesn't say, "There is now therefore no sins to those who are in Christ." That's your practice. That's progressional. There are days when we're walking in the Spirit and we're more sanctified, and then we have weeks when we're not very sanctified. But don't forget, your position never changes. You have the righteousness of Christ. You need to understand the two and the distinction between them.

It doesn't say "no sin." It doesn't say "no mistakes." Christians do sin. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. He murdered her husband, Uriah, to cover his sin. Peter pulled his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane and tried to take off a servant's head. Abraham sinned. Moses sinned. Some of God's greatest saints have stumbled and fallen.

What does "no condemnation" mean? It means that God has acquitted believers of guilt and has lifted the judicial sentence under which they were formerly guilty. So God has acquitted us and lifted the sentence. The condemnation involves two things. It involves the fact you're guilty, and it involves the judgment. In our criminal court systems, if you are found guilty, then you enter the punishment or penalty phase. The condemnation is both things: you're found guilty, and it is also the punishment. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." So we are under condemnation since we are under Adam, but when we are born again, we are taken out of Adam and placed in Christ, resulting in no condemnation. God is not and God will not ever condemn you. God is not angry with you, and God will not kick you out of His family if you stumble and fall.

However, Satan will try to condemn you. He is the accuser of the brethren. People will try to condemn you. They'll point their finger and put you down. Your own heart will try to condemn you. But God will never condemn you. Romans 8:31 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Isn't that a great question? If God is for us—and He is—then who can be against us? Verse 34 says, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." God is not the one condemning you. He's not the one who's going to kick you out of His family. He doesn't hate

you. Now God may chasten you for your sin to bring you back into alignment and to help you grow in sanctification. But He's not going to kick you out of His family or judge you or condemn you. That was dealt with at the Cross.

Now there is one last phrase in verse 1, and it's the most important in the verse, that we need to understand. The phrase is "in Christ Jesus." I wish there was some way for me to communicate accurately to you the importance of this concept. I believe that it is the greatest concept taught in the Bible for the believer to grasp, to fathom and to understand.

Paul used it as his favorite statement over 100 times. Some say 165 times Paul used in his epistles the phrase "in Christ," "in Christ Jesus" or "in Christ Jesus our Lord." Read in Ephesians 1 all the blessings from God that come to us because we are "in Christ Jesus." All the heavenly blessings of the Spirit come to us because we are "in Christ Jesus." So you need to understand what it means to be "in Christ" or "in Christ Jesus." It is the only condition for no condemnation. It is being "in Christ Jesus."

Now there are only two classes of humanity, spiritually speaking. There are those who are in Christ, where there is no condemnation; and then there are those who are in Adam, who are condemned and under the wrath of God. Romans 5:12-21 makes this very, very clear.

The Bible teaches that all of humanity can be put into two groups. It's not male/female. It's not gender or race. It's not nationality. It's not education. It's not social status. In one group are those who are in Adam the first. Remember when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden and Adam sinned? Sin and death came upon them and then came upon the whole human race as a result. When Adam and Eve disobeyed in the Garden, they plunged humanity into sin and condemnation. Everything true of Adam is true of us. Everyone born into this world, every human being, is born in Adam. That is why you have to be born again of the Spirit to be taken out of Adam, who acts as a federal head and brings condemnation, to be born into Christ and to have salvation. So we're born in Adam under condemnation, and then we are born of the Spirit, or become believers, and we're in Christ and now there is salvation. Everything true of Christ is imputed to us.

So those are the only two categories mankind falls into. Now we might call them "the saved" and "the unsaved." We might call them "believers" and "unbelievers." We might call them "Christians" and "non-Christians." There is no in-between. There are believers and unbelievers, saved and unsaved. There is the lost and there is the saved.

Now that is not a popular view in our culture today. We've got all these paths and all these roads and all these religions to salvation. "They'll all get you to God." But the Bible is very simple; there's only one way to be saved, and that's in Christ Jesus. If you're not in Christ, then you're in Adam, and you're under sin and death and condemnation.

I can't emphasize the importance more of understanding what it means to be in Christ.

Let me ask some questions about being in Christ Jesus. First of all, how do you get "in

Christ"? The answer is by being born again. By believing in Jesus Christ by faith. You trust Him. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." So the way you get into Jesus is by trusting Him as your Savior. The Spirit of God takes you out of Adam and places you in Christ.

Then it's the Holy Spirit's job to lead you. Romans 8 is the life in the Spirit. In Romans 7, the Holy Spirit is mentioned once, but in Romans 8, He's mentioned over and over and over again. We go from life in the flesh to life in the Spirit. He indwells you.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul tells the believers in Corinth, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." So it is the Holy Spirit's job not only to convict you of sin and regenerate you and seal you unto the day of redemption, but He takes you out of Adam and transfers you into Christ and you are identified with Him. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

The second question is, who is in Christ? Obviously from my first answer, it is very clear that all those who are truly Christians are in Christ. All those who have been born again, and only those who have been born again, are in Christ. You can't be in Christ if you haven't been born again. You have to be born again to be in Christ, and if you are in Christ, you're a Christian, a child of God.

Now there are no degrees of being in Christ. Remember the three tenses of salvation? Justification, sanctification and glorification. There are no degrees of justification. The moment you are born again, you are justified. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years later, you are no more or less justified than you were the second you trusted Jesus Christ. You're not less justified, you're not more justified, you're just justified. Some like to take the word "justified" and break it down to "just as if I'd never sinned." Justification is God declaring you righteous. It's your position or standing.

The problem's not with that. The problem's with our sanctification, because a lot of times we're not growing and becoming more holy. God says, "Be holy as I am holy." That's what it means to be sanctified. The words "saint," "sanctified" and "holy" all come from the same root word. It means to be "set apart" and "made holy."

So we're positionally holy, we're being made practically holy and we will be perfectly holy when we die and go to heaven and get a new body.

My third question about being in Christ is, when do you get in Christ? The moment you are saved or regenerated.

The fourth question is, how long will you be in Christ? This question is the one that causes people to argue and debate. My answer is forever. And I believe it's taught in the Scriptures, or I wouldn't give it as my answer. I believe that once you're in Christ, you're always in Christ. You didn't put yourself in Christ, and you can't take yourself out of Christ. The Holy Spirit put you in Christ, and He's not going to take you out of Christ. So once in Christ, always in Christ. That's

why I've called this series Blessed Assurance.

Now good Christians do disagree. Some believe that you can lose your salvation. Some Christians believe that you can't lose your salvation. I don't know how anyone can study Romans 8—it starts with “no condemnation,” in the middle is no defeat and ends with no separation—and think that you could ever be lost. That's pretty hard. Every time I study, I become more convinced.

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.

O what a foretaste of glory divine.

Heir of salvation, purchase of God.

Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song.

Praising my Savior all the day long.”

Now I'm not perfect. Some people think Pastor Miller glows in the dark. People have come up to my wife and said, “It must be awesome living with Pastor John.” She says tongue in cheek, “Oh, yeah. It's awesome.” I've been justified, and I'm being sanctified, but I've got a ways to go. You've got a longer way to go. Don't laugh too hard; you're busted!

But one day all the Christians are going to get to heaven and we're going to look at each other and say, “Isn't God good? Isn't the grace of God amazing?” We're saved by grace. We're sanctified by grace. And one day we'll be glorified by God's marvelous grace.

How long will it last? Romans 8:39 says that there is no separation “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Bible teaches in Ephesians 1:13-14 and in Ephesians 4:30 that “you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” until “the day of redemption.” Redemption is that third stage of salvation, that glorification. So the minute you are saved, you are sealed with the Spirit and you are secure until the day that you go home to be with Jesus Christ. This is your position. It's called your standing. It's not progressive; it's perfect. It's your position in Christ. You have His life, His death and His Resurrection.

Let me give you an illustration. We all know the story of Noah and the ark. God brought judgment on the whole world. I believe the flood was universal. I believe that everyone except Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives and the animals on the ark died. God had Noah build a big ark. It's interesting that the Old Testament says that he was to use pitch on it inside and out. The same word used for “atonement” in the Hebrew in the Old Testament is translated “pitch” here. So this ark becomes a type or picture of Jesus Christ.

This big boat had one door, one way in, and the door was opened and Noah's family went on

the ark with all the animals. God shut the door. Then the rains came down and the floods came up. Remember that song in Sunday school? Who was saved? Only those who were in the ark.

Jesus Christ is our ark of safety. There is no condemnation to those who are in the ark of Christ. The world will be judged. The world will be condemned. But the Christians have passed from death to life. In John 5:24, Jesus is speaking. He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment..."—or "condemnation"—"...but has passed from death into life." So you hear God's Word, you believe on Jesus and you actually pass from death to life.

Jesus said again in John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." It's almost as though Jesus has taken a nail and driven it through the boards. He turns it over and bends the end of the nail down, so no one can take it apart. "I give them eternal life. They shall never perish. No one can pluck them out of My hand. My Father, Who gave them to Me, is greater than all. No one can pluck them out of My Father's hand."

You might be saying, "Well, Pastor John, does that mean we can live however we want, expecting to go to heaven? I can just go out and sin and I'm saved, so I can live however I want?" The answer is "No!" When you become a Christian, not only is there no condemnation, but there is now a liberation. I want to read Romans 8:2-4. It says, "For the law of the Spirit of life..."—a reference to the Holy Spirit—"...in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." It's freed me from the condemnation and guilt of the law. "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." It doesn't say "in sinful flesh" but "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Jesus was fully human. This is the Incarnation. Jesus condemned sin at the Cross. He paid the penalty for our sin. Verse 4 continues, "...that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us..."—and here's our sanctification—"...who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

So being in Christ with no condemnation is no license to living sinfully. But we should "walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh" so that the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us.

So there are two things that are blessed assurances. Number one, we have the assurance of no condemnation; and number two, we have the assurance of a new liberation. The Holy Spirit sets us free.

Did you notice that when you became a Christian there was a joy in serving God? There was a joy in living for God? A joy in pleasing God? You wanted to do what God wants you to do. It's not a burden anymore. That's what God does; He gives us His Spirit and enables us to walk in

a way that is pleasing to Him.

When you become a Christian, God the Father joins you to Jesus Christ the Son, and it's all done through the work of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "I am the vine, and you are the branches." We are united to Christ. He does it through the work of the Holy Spirit. So God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all working for your salvation.

Amen.