

No Condemnation – Part 1

Romans 8:1-4

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We're going to read only the first four verses, and we're going to take two weeks to look at these, Romans 8:1-4. Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The verse stops at that point. Verse 2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Finally, after a long uphill climb, we come to the summit of the book of Romans, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We come to the top of the mountain, so to speak. Romans 8 really is the culmination of Paul's argument on how God saves sinners. How does God save sinners? The simple answer is: In Christ Jesus. He saves sinners by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. He has taken us from the deep dark valley of man's sin and condemnation where the wrath of God was revealed, we began in Romans 1:18 all the way to Romans 3:20, and we saw the whole world condemned before the judgment seat of God. Then, we moved to salvation, Romans 3:21-Romans 5:21. In this section of salvation, the righteousness of God was revealed, and we saw how God saves sinners. The answer to all of what we've covered so far is in the first statement of verse 1, chapter 8. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." So the answer to how God saves sinners is in verse 1, it is in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, man finds justification. We find sanctification, chapters 6 and 7, and now tonight we begin in Romans 8, preservation. So, we have justification, sanctification and preservation.

Romans 8 is the summit of Paul's revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been called the mountain peak of scripture, an enormous vista full of the wonders of God's grace opens before us. Have you ever been on a hike, and I'm not a hiker. I'm not a fisherman, and I'm not a hiker. You say, "Well, what do you do?" I just sit around, okay? I have the gift of just sitting around. I've always wondered, "Why do people hike?" It's just, you get exhausted, you get tired. My wife loves to hike—I do not love to hike. It's like, "Let's go back and drink some lemonade and sit around in the shade," or something like that. When you do hike, you get to see some beautiful views, right? You get out on the way, you get on the mountain peak and stand on top of the mountain and you can look around. You can see those beautiful vistas. Well, Romans 8 is the mountain summit. This is the Mt. Everest of scripture, and when we get up onto this mountain we can see all of God's purpose, all of God's plan, and all of God's revelation as it culminates for us in Romans 8. Romans 8 is without a doubt one of the best known and best loved chapters in the entire Bible. As we go through it over these many weeks, you're going to discover that some of the best known verses and often quoted verses...who doesn't know Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose," but we're going to get it in its

context, and we're going to understand what Paul meant by all things working together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

In our study of Romans 8, we need to approach it with awe, reverence and humble thanksgiving. I want you to look at the context by backing up into chapter 7, verses 24-25. At the end of chapter 7, where Paul told us how not to be sanctified, that is, by our own energy, our own efforts, or by the law, he comes to the conclusion, "O wretched man that I am!" I believe that Paul is making this statement in a converted state. Paul is not describing a pre-conversion struggle with the flesh. Paul is now a Christian, and he makes it clear that Christians do struggle often with besetting sins. So, he cries and says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then he answers his question, "I thank God through Jesus Christ..." so, in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, "...our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh..." that is, my old sinful carnal nature I serve "...the law of sin." Paul acknowledged there that he was in a battle, and we experience that as believers. Being a Christian doesn't mean that you will be free from temptation. Being a Christian doesn't mean that you will be free from falling prey to temptation, but it does mean that you have now been given a gift from God, the Holy Spirit, to bring victory and to bring strength to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts or the deeds of the flesh. I believe that Christians do struggle still with the old nature. We've been given a new nature. We need to know who we are in Christ. We need to believe who we are in Christ, and we need to yield to who we are in Christ—know, reckon and yield, Romans 6.

In Romans 7 we saw Paul use the personal pronoun "I" 27 times. You cannot live a life of holiness in your own strength. Then you move to Romans 8 where he begins to speak about the Spirit. Paul uses the word "Spirit" 19 times or makes a reference to the Holy Spirit. In chapter 7, Paul showed us that we can't be made holy by self effort or keeping the law. In chapter 7, we saw the weakness of the law. In chapter 8, we see the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not saved by the law, chapter 7, we are not sanctified by the law. We are saved in Christ, not by our own works. We are saved by the work of the Holy Spirit who takes us out of Adam and places us into Christ. Now, we are going to also see that we are sanctified by Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are basically two themes that run through Romans 8. Theologians debate, discuss, and argue as to what the main theme of Romans is, and I think that it is equally two themes. If you're taking notes, write them down. The first is sanctification, and the second is security. Woven through this chapter, I am going to give an outline based on those two points. We are going to be spending many weeks on how to live a holy life, the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in holiness and victory. We don't have to be captive to the flesh. We might have those times when we cry, "O wretched man that I am," but we know that through Jesus Christ there is victory for us and also we are kept secure in Christ. One of the questions that he is going to answer in Romans 8 is the question: Does justification by faith last? If we are not saved by our works, we're not saved by law, and we're not sanctified by law, then will this faith justification, will this sanctification of the Holy Spirit, will it last? Will it get us to heaven? I believe the answer is yes! Romans 8 opens with no condemnation, and it ends with no separation. What

an awesome chapter Romans 8 is!

The key phrase to these two themes, sanctification and security, is the important phrase, and we've talked about it many times in our series on Romans and on other studies here, is the phrase in Christ Jesus, and it's repeated in different forms. In verse 39 we have, "...in Christ Jesus our Lord." Look at verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." I'm convinced that if you learned all the truth that is contained in the statement, "In Christ Jesus," it would completely totally transform your life. It will certainly transform your Christian life. Of all the epistles of Paul, this is his most favorite phrase. He uses it 165 times, "In Christ Jesus." How does God save sinners? In Christ or in Christ Jesus. Then look at verse 39, "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is..." what? "...in Christ Jesus..." there we have it again. So the doctrine of our position of being in Christ and united to Christ, not only is Christ in you the hope of glory, but you are in Christ. So, Christ is in me to give me power to live righteous. I am in Christ declared righteous. I like that concept. I am in Christ declared righteous by God the Father, my position. Christ is in me to make me righteous, that's my sanctification. So, I'm justified—in Christ. I'm sanctified—Christ in me. You need to understand those two relationships that we have to Jesus Christ. He is both in us and He is both with us.

Let me give you just a simple outline of the book of Romans. There are about 20 different ways you can outline the book, but I want you to see the forest. I don't want to just look at the trees. I want to look at the whole picture for just a moment, and we are going to get into verse 1. The first section of the book of Romans 8 you might say is the power for holy living. In Christ we have sanctification, verses 1-17. Verses 1-17 of Romans 8 is power for holy living, we are in Christ for sanctification. It breaks down like this. We have a new position, verses 1-4. We have a new life, verses 5-13, and we have a new relationship, verses 14-17. The second division is verses 18-39. In this section we have the hope of eternal glory. In Christ we have security. So, there's our two themes, we have sanctification and security. The outline would be verses 18-25, we have a new hope; verses 26-27, we have a new help, the Holy Spirit; verses 28-30, we have a new knowledge that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose; verses 31-39, we have a new assurance. The focus there is the work of the Holy Spirit in giving us security and a sense of comfort.

I believe that the New Testament teaches that a Christian can be sure they are going to heaven. I believe in the doctrine of assurance—that you, as a Christian, can know, must know, and should know. I believe you're going to be ineffective in living the Christian life and serving God if you don't know you are saved. Can you imagine going witnessing and you don't know you're saved? "Hey, you need Jesus. I don't know if I got Him, but you need Him. He'll take you to heaven. I don't know if I'm going to heaven, but He'll take you to heaven." How effective can you be in living the Christian life if you don't know that you are saved? Romans 8 is the life of the Spirit, life of security, and life of assurance. We have victory, we have Sonship, we have hope, and we have security all found for us in Jesus Christ. Someone said it like this, "Christ is around you, the Spirit is within you, and God is for you." That's what Romans 8 says. Christ is in you, the Spirit is around you, and God is for you.

As I said, I want to look at verses 1-4, but we are going to take a couple weeks in breaking them down. In verses 1-4 we see first of all that our blessed position brings to us, verse 1, no condemnation. In verses 2-4 we have a new liberation. Now, go back with me to verse 1. Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Notice that it opens with a "therefore." The question is how far back does this "therefore" go? Does it go just back into the end of chapter 7? Does it go back into chapter 6? Does it go into 5? Does it go to 4? Does it go to 3? Does it go to 1? The answer is yes. It goes all the way back to chapter 1. That's why I said we are at the summit. I don't climb mountains, but I do climb the mountain of scripture and this excites me. I love the view that I get from this. I can get to the top of the mountain, look around and look way back and see the horrible pit that God brought me from, and then I realize that in Christ Jesus there is now no condemnation. God took sinners and He sent His Son, who died on the cross, and He rose again from the dead. He died for our sins, rose from the dead, and those sinners who believe in Jesus Christ, they are justified. They are declared righteous from all unrighteousness and all sin.

I want you to notice a little word there in verse 1, "There is therefore now..." believe it or not, that's an important word. That little word "now" emphasizes when the blessing of no condemnation or salvation from condemnation became ours. It is in what is called the present tense, so it is a present position of all those who are in Christ. When did we experience salvation? When did we experience this position of no condemnation? The answer is: The moment we were born again. I'm going to use some synonymous terms—born again, regenerated, sanctified, placed into Christ. Those are all terms describing the moment (CLAP), "How's that for a moment," the moment that you were placed in Christ. We talked about being in Adam and the condemnation that is there, and the whole human race is seen either in Adam or in Jesus, right? That you're either in Adam, in condemnation, or you are in Christ, in salvation. Those are the two categories. Your first birth brought you into Adam. All that is true of Adam, his sin, his disobedience, his condemnation was true of us. Then, our second birth brought us into union and position of being in Christ, and being in Christ there is now therefore no condemnation. What a marvelous, marvelous truth that indeed is! No condemnation now, no condemnation tomorrow, and no condemnation forever and ever and ever and ever! That's what that word "now" means, by the way, all that from the word "now." I was living under condemnation. Then, I was translated out of Adam into Christ, and now there is no condemnation because of my justification.

Go back with me to Romans 5:1. There is an interesting contrast where Paul is basically saying the same thing in two different ways. In chapter 5, verse 1, "Therefore being justified..." remember I just used those synonymous terms. I used the words born again, regenerated, sanctified, justified. "...by faith, we have peace with God through..." or in or by who? "...our Lord Jesus Christ." So when you celebrate communion tonight, you need to remember that your salvation is because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, and your salvation is in, by, and through Jesus Christ. Go back with me now to Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." So, it says the same thing in different ways.

I want you to notice what Paul doesn't say in Romans 8:1. He doesn't say, "There is now

therefore no mistakes to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Is that what it says? He doesn’t say, “There is now therefore no sins to those who are in Christ Jesus.” He doesn’t say that either. He didn’t say, “There is now therefore no stumbling to those who are in Christ Jesus.” He says, “There is therefore now no condemnation.” We get the idea that when we are Christians and we’re in Christ, and this may seem elementary but I have had people actually try to argue with me to the opposite. If you are a Christian, you are in Christ. If you are not a Christian, you are not in Christ. There is no such thing as a Christian who is not in Christ, okay? Only those who are saved are in Christ, and those who are unsaved are not in Christ. So, those who are not saved are not in Christ, they are under condemnation. Those who are saved are in Christ, and there is no condemnation. It doesn’t say they live perfectly. It doesn’t say they don’t sin. It doesn’t say they don’t stumble. It doesn’t say they don’t fall. It just says God is not condemning us. It says, “...no condemnation.” Woodrow Cole? says, “This is one of the greatest truths in the Bible, a book filled with great truths.”

I want you to look at verse 1. In my King James translation that I use it says, “...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” That statement does not belong in verse 1. You say, “Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute! You’re just going to rip things out of the Bible and move ‘em around and put ‘em wherever you want ‘em to be put?” How many of you, just out of curiosity, have another translation that omits that statement in verse 1? In your Bible, verse 1, all it says is, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Anybody have that in their Bible? Okay, some of you are like, “Uhhh. Yeah, I don’t want to lift my hand.” Well, that’s what it says, right? The statement does appear in verse 4, “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” You say, “Well, what’s it doing in verse 1?” I don’t know. You can do your own homework, you can do your own research, you can do your own study. You say, “Well then, how do we know we have a reliable Bible?” We have a reliable Bible. Somehow, someway in the King James Bible, based on some scribal error, no doubt, he probably didn’t drink enough coffee when he was translating the Bible. He saw it in verse 4 and accidentally put it in verse 1, but here’s the thing. In the older manuscripts it is omitted, and in the majority of those older manuscripts, or all of those older manuscripts, it is omitted. It’s a matter of what is called textual criticism. We know that it doesn’t appear until verse 4.

Now, if it did appear in verse 1, and this isn’t why I’m saying this, but if it did appear in verse 1, then the condemnation would only be for those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. The condemnation would be conditional, and it would say that once you get saved, you’re in Christ, and you better live a good, godly, holy, devoted life or you’re going to be condemned. So, mind your Ps and Qs, get your act together, and really live a holy life because if you don’t God is going to condemn you. So, you’re saved by grace through faith, but then you keep yourself by your own works. That’s not what the Bible teaches either here in Romans 8:1 or anywhere else in the Bible for that matter. You can’t do anything to save yourself. You can’t do anything to save yourself, and you can’t do anything to keep yourself in the love of God. God keeps you by His grace. He saves you by grace, He keeps you by grace, and He will take you to heaven by His grace, but somehow it ended up at the end of verse 1 and it should be omitted. When I quote Romans 8:1, I always just quote the first half of that verse because that

is rightfully what is in verse 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Period, and there should be a period after that statement. So, we're not in Adam, we are in Christ.

Let me make another statement about being in Christ. There are no degrees of being in Christ. You're not like super in Christ or really heavily in Christ. You might be really heavily into Christ, but your position in Christ doesn't change. No one, as a Christian, has any deeper degree of being in Christ than anyone else. You might be a very new Christian, stumbling and falling who still struggles, which all Christians have struggles, but you might have struggles that older Christians may not have. Your position in Christ is no different than the seasoned saint, and you need to grab ahold of that. I believe that 99% of the people that come to me for counseling and are all distraught, worried, and freaked out about the sins that they struggle with have forgotten this point. You are in Christ perfectly righteous, and there is no condemnation. Now, your own heart may condemn you, and satan may condemn you, and your husband or wife may condemn you, and your friends may condemn you, but God is not condemning you. Isn't that great? God is not condemning you! The sooner that you grasp ahold of that, the better off you're going to be in your battle with the flesh and your sinful nature. So, there are no degrees of being in Christ. Now, who is in Christ? All believers. When were we placed in Christ? The moment we were converted or saved. How were we placed in Christ? This is a whole subject in itself, and I won't tarry on it, but the answer is 1 Corinthians 12:13, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit took you out of Adam and placed you into Christ.

In these first four verses of Romans 8, we see that God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were all involved in our salvation; that God the Father sent the Son, God the Son died on the cross, and God the Holy Spirit convicted us, drew us to Jesus, gave us new life, took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. Too many times we forget about what happened to us the moment we are saved. Here is the question we need to ask and answer. What does he mean by no condemnation? No condemnation means that God has acquitted believers of the guilt and has lifted the judicial sentence under which they were formally living. I'd like to think of no condemnation as God is not, God will not, ever condemn you for your sin. God is not angry with you, and God will not punish you. You see why Romans 8:1 is so awesome! God will never condemn you, God is not angry with you, and God will not punish you. Some people go through their whole Christian life thinking that God is just so angry with them, so upset with them, and they forget the fact that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

If you practice sin willfully, deliberately, and habitually, you need to ask yourself, "Have I been saved? Am I born again?" First John tells us that if we are really born of God then we are not going to practice sin. It doesn't mean we won't stumble and fall into sin, but we won't lie in our sin, we'll come back. The story of the prodigal son is a great illustration. The younger son said to his father, "Father, give me the goods that divides to me," and he gave him his inheritance. He went into a far country and wasted his substance on riotous or prodigal living. You know how the son ended up, right? In a pigpen. He was hungry and he had no money, he had no food, and pigs don't share...that's because their pigs. What did the son (underline the word

"son") do? He came to himself and he said, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough to spare and I perish with hunger? I will arise, and I will go back to my father and say, 'Father I've sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I'm no longer worthy to be called thy son.'" So, he dusted himself off as best he could and makes the long journey back to his father. When the father saw the son, covered with mud and smelling like a pig, coming down the road, what did the father do? He ran to him. I'm sure the prodigal son thought, "Oh no! I'm going to get ready to brace, he's gonna smack me!" He probably hid books in his pants. "He's gonna give me a whoopin!" Instead, the father threw his arms out. The son had not been bathed, the son had not changed his clothes. The father threw his arms around the son and began to smother him with kisses. The father said, "The son which was lost is now found! The son which was dead is now alive." He called his servants and said, "Kill the fatted calf and let's throw a big party!" The son even tried to repent to the father, and the father stopped him. He didn't even let him get through his whole spiel, "I'm not worthy to be called your son. Just let me be one of your hired servants." The father then called for a ring, and he put it back on his son's finger. He took a robe and put it back on his son. He put shoes on his feet. He killed the fatted calf, and the father said, "It's time to party!" You see, that's the attitude of God toward His children. He's not condemning you. He loves you, He's forgiven you, and He accepts and receives you.

This is not a license to sin. Tonight is a great night to repent of any sin that you've fallen into and as we take communion to ask God to forgive you. What you totally need to grab ahold of tonight, and this is our only theme in this verse, is that God is for us, and if God is for us who can be against us? Let me give you a couple of verses to write down where Jesus said the same thing. In John 5:24, Jesus said these words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Not only did Paul say it, but Jesus said it. Then Jesus said this in John 10:27-29. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 27 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." He's not finished, verse 29, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." I mean take Romans 8:1 and then take John 5:24 and John 10:27-29. Just write down those verses, highlight them in your Bible, read them over and over and over again, and then be so bold and courageous to say, "I believe it, that settles it!" Just rest there. Don't worry. Don't fret. Rest in God's Word. God said it, I believe it, that settles it!

Do you know sometimes in carpentry a carpenter will drive a couple extra nails if he wants two boards to hold really tight. Sometimes he'll go behind the boards, and you guys know how sometimes when you're nailing you'll then bend the nail over. Right? So you drive several nails and then you go on the other side and you take your hammer and you bend those nails over. That's what Jesus does in this verse. Let me show you what I'm talking about. First of all Jesus says, "I give to them eternal life," so He drove the first nail. The second nail He drove was, "They shall never perish." I mean, that's two nails, right? First He says, "They shall have eternal life." Eternal life is, guess what? Eternal. I studied all day to figure that out. If you have eternal life...this is going to be a profound statement. If you have eternal life, you have eternal

life. Whoo! That's awesome! It doesn't say temporary life. It says eternal life, and eternal life is life with a quality and a new quantity. You enter in immediately to a spiritual life, and it lasts forever. So, the first nail is, "I give them eternal life." The second nail is, "They shall never perish." The third nail is, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My Father's hand." Then he drives the fourth nail, "My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." And then He takes the hammer and bends over the nails on the back. He just piles it on, piles it on. You study those statements there in John's gospel, they are so powerful in the Greek tense there. No man ever, in any way, shall be able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. "My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

I want you to go back with me to Romans 8:1. "There is therefore now no condemnation...", no condemnation. The word "no" in the Greek is emphatic. In the Greek it actually starts with, "No condemnation therefore." The first word in a Greek sentence is for emphasis. "No now therefore condemnation." It's emphatic—never, ever will be any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the next several weeks, as we go through Romans 8, Paul is going to take this one thought and he's going to expound on it. So, over the next many weeks, he's going to take this one thought that when we are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation, never ever will be any condemnation, and once you're in Christ you will always be in Christ. You can't get out of Christ. I know of no indication anywhere in the Scriptures that having been placed in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit you can ever get out of Christ. You say, "Well, what if you jump out of His hand?" It's going to be pretty hard to do, His hands span the whole universe. You can't jump out of His hand. Why would you want to jump out of His hand?

You know, all human illustrations break down somewhere, but there are some times we can gain truth through human illustrations. I have a biological son, a 24-year-old son, his name is Jarrod. He's in China teaching English. No matter where he goes or what he does, no matter what happens to him, he's always going to be my biological son. He can renounce me. He can reject me. He could say, "I no longer want to be your son." Does that change the biological truth that he is my son? Nothing he can do. I believe the same truth holds for our salvation once you have been born again. Once you have been born again, I don't think you can ever be unborn. You can't unborn yourself. You can't unregenerate yourself. I know some people will argue with me and some people won't agree with me, and I love you even though you're wrong, I love you, you're a brother or a sister in Christ, but I believe that once you have been regenerated, what began with God's grace will end in glory. We're going to get there! "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...whom he did predestinate...them he justified...whom he justified...he sanctified...whom he sanctified...he glorified." That's called the golden chain. It can't be broken. Once the process starts, it cannot be broken. Not only that, look at the end of the chapter and then we'll wrap this up and close. Paul says in verse 28, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen? Let's pray.