

LIVING WITHOUT CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1-2

We're still in this series on the Book of Romans, "Power to Change". Last week we did a survey of the entire chapter of Romans 8. I said that many Bible teachers consider this chapter as the greatest chapter ever written on the Christian life. It has so much to say. I want us to look at some of the specifics in a bit more detail. Today, I want us to look at the first two verses.

Now, one of the things about studying the Bible is you keep in mind the Law of Correlation. This Law of Correlation is a principle of interpretation in Bible study. It says that the Scripture itself is the best interpreter of Scripture. In other words, Scripture interprets itself. It means that the best way to understand what one verse means is to look at other verses and let those other verses clarify what it means. You also interpret a difficult passage in light of a very clear passage.

Today, I want us to take the Law of Correlation and apply it to the first two verses of Romans 8. We'll read these two verses and then look at other verses throughout Scripture that clarify the full meaning of these two verses.

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death." This is one of the most important verses on the Christian life that you could read or memorize or meditate on. I have entitled this message today, "Living without Condemnation".

Now, let's define condemnation. Let me illustrate it with this:

A king had 10 wild dogs. He used them to torture and kill any minister that misguided him. A minister once gave an opinion which was wrong and which the king didn't like at all...So he ordered that the minister to be thrown to the dogs.

The minister said, "I served you loyally 10 years and you do this.?" The king was unrelenting. The Minister pleaded, "Please give me 10 days before you throw me to the dogs". The king agreed.

In those 10 days the minister went to the keeper of the dogs and told him he wanted to serve the dogs for the next 10 days. The guard was baffled. But he agreed. So, the minister started feeding the dogs, caring for them, washing them, providing all sorts of comfort for them.

So, when the 10 days were up. The king ordered that the minister be thrown to the dogs as sentenced. When he was thrown in, everyone was amazed at what they saw. The dogs were wagging their tails and playing with the condemned minister, even licking his feet.

The king was baffled at what he saw. "What happened to the dogs? !!!" He growled. The minister then said, "I served the dogs for only 10 days and they didn't forget my service. Yet I served you for 10 years and you forgot all at the first mistake!"

The king realized his mistake...and replaced the dogs with crocodiles!

Guess you thought it had a happy ending, huh? Sorry but he was condemned anyway by the cruel and heartless king. But our King, Lord Jesus, is different, Amen? So,

I. WHAT IS CONDEMNATION?

It's easy to describe condemnation by talking about how you feel.

1) You feel guilty. You know you did wrong and you're condemned for it. You're on death row, in prison. You got caught with your hand in the cookie jar!

2) You feel fear. Fear of punishment. I'm not only guilty but I'm going to be punished! Something I have done is wrong and I'm going to be condemned.

3) You feel self-rejection. I blew it! How stupid I was! I am a no-good scoundrel!

The Bible says that God doesn't want Christians to live under those feelings -- guilt, fear, self-rejection. We looked in Romans 7 about the struggle Paul went through. He said basically, *"All the things I want to do I end up not doing and all the things I don't want to do I end up doing. I'm miserable because I can't make myself do what I want to do. I know what's right but I can't do it!"* He's really struggling. At the end of chapter 7 he says, "What a wretched man I am!" He's talking about the Christian who is struggling. Then, in the end he talks about victory in Christ. How is that so? He explains it in these first two verses in Romans 8. Let's see how Paul explains why we're no longer condemned as Christians. But first, let's talk about sin because this is the heart of the issue. Let's look at

II. HOW GOD RESPONDS TO ME WHEN I SIN

When a Christian sins, what happens? If we don't understand this, we're going to avoid God out of fear. We're going to find it hard to feel close to Him most of the time. What happens when I sin?

1. God does not reject me when I sin. In John 6:37, Jesus is saying that if you're a Christian -- you received him as your Lord and Savior -- God is never going to reject you after that. *"All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."* Never -- God will never cast you out. He will never reject you once you are in Christ. A Christian doesn't have to worry about God kicking him out of His family. You don't have to worry about losing your salvation. God doesn't write you off. He still loves you. He still accepts you, even when you sin. Why?

a. Because His love is unconditional. He says in Jer. 31:3 *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness"*. How long is

everlasting? And his love is unfailing. You may fail him but he'll never fail you. There are no conditions. His love for you is not based on your performance, whether you're naughty or nice. He accepts you

b. Because of your position in Christ. That's what Romans 8:1 is all about.

"No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." "In Christ", that's the most popular phrase Paul uses to describe a Christian -- 167 times in the New Testament he says we're "in Christ". God does not reject you, even when you sin. You are in Christ. He will always treat you as his child. That's one of the things it means to live without condemnation.

2. God is not angry with me when I'm inconsistent.

Sometimes, we get angry with ourselves, we get impatient. But God doesn't. One of the most beautiful truths you can learn in Scripture is God is patient with you. He understands that it takes time for you to grow. Even when you're inconsistent, He does not condemn you. Let me be clear though that God is angry at sin. He hates sin. The Bible says in **Habakkuk 1:13, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing."** As the old saying goes, "He hates sin, not the sinner". Why?

a. God knows exactly what I'm made of. Psalm 103:13-14 *"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."* God knows exactly what you're made of. God knows you're a human being. He knows what you're like. He knows you have weaknesses and frailties. He knows your struggle against sin. He knows you're not perfect. That's good news! He's like a father. He has compassion for His children.

When our children begin to walk, they stumble. They fall flat on their face. What do we do? Give them a 30-minute lecture? Spank them? Send them to their room for an hour? No.

We pick them up, dust them off, correct them and help them get on the right track again. We don't scold them, they're babies just learning to walk!

Likewise, God doesn't look at you and say, "You blew it! That was stupid of you!" No, He knows your frame. He knows what you're like. He knows you make mistakes because He made you. He knows everything about you. He can't be disappointed because it won't be any surprise. He knows just what you're going to do. That's one of the reasons why God isn't angry with you when you're inconsistent. Another reason is that

b. Jesus understands because He's been there too. Hebrews 4:15-16 *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."* Why does God not get uptight with us? Because Jesus has been there. He came to earth. He's experienced the same temptations. He knows the hassles. He knows where we're coming from.

God is never angry with me when I'm inconsistent. Is that a liberating truth? To understand that God is not mad at me because I'm in Christ is freeing. The hardest lesson I've had to learn as a Christian is the fact that God does not become impatient with me when I fall over and over and over and over in the same areas. Have you ever felt like "I've committed this sin so many times I'm embarrassed to go ask forgiveness again! ... I've committed that sin so many times, I'm embarrassed.

Surely God's going to say "Not that one again! Same old sins over and over." God says "I'm not angry with you." Jesus understands the temptation.

3. God does not punish me when I sin.

What is punishment? Punishment is payment for a wrongdoing. Why does God not punish me?

The law of double jeopardy says that once you've been condemned, punished for a crime, you can't be convicted and condemned again for the same crime. The Bible says that Jesus Christ took all the punishment, all my sins, everything that I'm ever going to commit and took the punishment for me about 2000 years ago. Why would God punish Jesus Christ 2000 years ago and then come and say "That wasn't enough. I'm going to do it to you too." Jesus took our punishment, so a Christian is never punished for his sins. Instead, he is disciplined. There is a big difference between discipline and punishment.

Romans 5:18 says, "Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people." One man, Adam, caused the problem. One man, Jesus, brought the solution by taking the penalty.

God does not punish me when I sin. Punishment is paying for the past. Your past has been paid for. When we fail to understand this point, when we sin and something goes wrong in our lives, we say, "Maybe that's God getting back at me." You get sick or you lose your job or you have financial difficulties -- "God must be repaying me for that sin I did 20 years ago." Some people commit one thing 20 years ago and spend the rest of their lives thinking God's trying to get even. But God's not trying to get even with you. He settled the score at the cross. That's what it means to live under no condemnation. If you're a Christian, your sins have already

been paid for and God does not hold a grudge. You are not an enemy. You are His child.

This will affect your total lifestyle when you get what it means to live not under condemnation. Some of you think I'm creating a license to sin. No, I'm not. This is the truth. A lot of people don't want to teach this to Christians. They say this gives you a license to sin. It doesn't. Why? Because discipline awaits you. Not punishment, but discipline. Hebrews 12:6 says, "...the Lord disciplines the one he loves and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." What I'm saying is if you try to test God by going your way thinking that you'll be forgiven anyway, God's correcting hand will come on you to make you come to your senses. And believe me, you wouldn't want to test God again.

So, to recap, when you sin, God does not reject you, does not get angry at you, and does not punish you. Now,

III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHRISTIAN SINS?

Six things the Scripture says happens when a Christian sins:

1. It brings conviction from God.

The Bible says in John 16:8 *"When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment."* That is the Holy Spirit's ministry -- to convict. Conviction means God making me aware of my sin. He's not going to lay on a big guilt trip but He is going to say, "That was wrong." He is going to point out when you're wrong. He's not going to say, "You're worthless, no good, you're valueless!" But He is going to say "That was wrong!"

In Acts 2:37, we read, *"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"* Here is a clear example of conviction. Have you ever heard a sermon that did that to you? Have you ever had a sermon do that to you without your feeling really down on

yourself? Sure! A lot of times you can be cut to the heart with saying, "I'm not living up to my potential. This is what I could be." How do you tell the difference between condemnation and conviction? Condemnation says "I'm no good and I'll never be any good!" Conviction says, "What shall I do? I'm going to change and be different. I'm going to ask God to work in my life. I want to be different."

One of the biggest problems I see in Christian's lives is the distinguishing the difference between the accusations of Satan and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says Satan is the accuser of the brethren and yet the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. How do you tell the difference between when it's Satan accusing you and when it's the Holy Spirit convicting you? Satan is general in his terms. "You're lousy. You'll never amount to anything." The Holy Spirit is always specific, "You're not having a quiet time. That video you're watching right now is dirty and obscene. You don't date your wife anymore." He'll be very specific about a specific sin in your life and He'll point to that. Look at the difference between Peter and Judas. Judas responded to condemnation and hung himself. Peter responded to conviction and went out and wept bitterly. Sixty days later God used him to bring 3,000 people to the Lord.

2. Sin hurts us and destroys our happiness.

Every sin I commit has a harmful effect on my body (physically), my emotions (emotionally), my mind (mentally), and my spirit (spiritually). **Galatians 6:7-8 says,** *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."* God's grace does not exempt you from the natural consequences of your own foolish mistakes. I could get drunk, get on the freeway, and kill myself and God would let it happen. I could smoke and get lung cancer even though I'm a Christian living under grace. I could buy Lotto tickets every day I come from work and lose my savings. Everything has a consequence in life. Good or bad. If you do good things

you have good consequences. If you do bad things you have bad consequences. It's not judgement, it's just the natural consequences. What you sow you reap. It's not a judgement but it is a consequence. If I put on 150 pounds extra and have a heart attack, that's not a judgement but it is a natural consequence of not taking of myself. Everything you do in life has a consequence -- good or bad.

3. Fellowship with God is broken.

You know, relationship and fellowship are two different things. When you sin, the relationship to God is not broken. You're still a Christian. You're still a child of God, but the fellowship is broken. I could totally dishonor my parents and lead a lifestyle that they totally disagreed with but the relationship will always be there. I will always be their child. I cannot be unborn. And a born again person cannot be unborn again.

When you sin, your fellowship is broken. *I John 1:6-7 "If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth."* How do you know when you're in fellowship? You have joy. The joyful Christian is in harmony with God. Psalm 51 is the psalm David wrote after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. In verse 12, he writes, *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation."* He hadn't lost his salvation. He lost his joy. Fellowship was broken.

4. Your usefulness to God is limited.

God can't use you as effectively. You're going to be an unproductive Christian if you allow sin to pile up in your life. *John 15:4 Jesus says, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."* If you want to see fruit in your life you have to be in tune with the Lord. You have to be in harmony. You

can't be going out living any kind of lifestyle of sin. So, God can't use you, you can't bear fruit in your life, if you let that sin pile up.

5. Sin brings loving discipline from God.

I already spoke about discipline and punishment earlier. Now, the world thinks they're synonymous. They're the same. But that's not how God thinks. The Bible differentiates between the two. I think it's very important for you to understand the difference between discipline and punishment biblically. It's going to make a difference how you respond to God.

In the Bible, discipline is given to you when you need to be corrected. Meanwhile, punishment is given to you when you need to be condemned. Discipline is given out of love. Punishment is given out anger. Now, Hebrews 12 uses the word "punish" but the Greek word is not the same as the word for condemnation. It's more akin to discipline. v.5 *"And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all."*

Folks, those are the consequences of sin. Finally,

IV. WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN DO WHEN HE SINS?

How should a Christian deal with sin in his life?

1. Confess it.

I John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* "Confess" in Greek means to speak the

same. Confession simply means I agree with God. "God I was wrong. ... I was jealous today ... I got angry with my wife today unnecessarily ... I was short with that person ... I had a judgmental, critical attitude." Confession is calling sin as it is, sin. No excuse, no alibis, no beating around the bush.

2. **Accept forgiveness and forgive yourself.** This is such a hard thing to do! It's easy to ask forgiveness; it's harder to believe we're forgiven. God wants you to understand that He doesn't want you to condemn yourself. God gets no personal joy in watching you emotionally whip yourself. It grieves Him.

3. **Grow in the Lord.**

Folks, recognize that you will never be sinless as long as you're here on earth, but you can sin less. To make sure it happens, you have to mature and grow as a Christian. And to grow, you must get closer to Jesus so that you will reflect more of him in your life. Spend more time with him in prayer, in reading your Bible, in memorizing Scripture. Jesus says, **"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit."** (John 15:5) You have to start hating sin the way he hates it. And be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's conviction when he points out a sin in your life.

Folks, I hope you understand now that in Christ, you possess the most wonderful privilege you can ever hope to have in this life and beyond. You're no longer condemned. God loves you just the way you are. He gave his only Son Jesus to die for you. That's the best expression of his love for you and that will never change. In return, give your best to him. Avoid sin at all cost. It'll be a struggle but with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can do it.