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No Condemnation
Romans 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot,

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Most of you know that I'm a big supporter of **counseling**.

I have a pastor who is also a therapist,

and she counsels me at least once a month,

we talk a lot about pastoring, but we also talk about life.

I've known her and have sought counsel from her off and on for over 20 years.

One of the most powerful things she has ever told me,

that she continues to remind me, is Romans 8:1.

*There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

No condemnation. None.

Have you ***ever really heard*** those words before?
 Have you ever heard them said ***directly*** to you?
 Do you know what they ***mean***?

Because I'd argue that those are some of the ***most powerful words***
 in all of scripture!

The ***entire book of Romans*** was written to people like us—
 people struggling to apply their faith in Jesus in a fast-changing pluralistic
 world where Christian faith was not the norm.
 They had plenty of things in their world vying for their attention,
 much like we do today.
 And they were struggling to understand just how to live in relationship with
 Jesus, and what their faith really meant.

So Paul writes Romans to ***summarize the Christian experience***:
 we try to understand God's will,
 but as Paul writes in Romans 3:23,
ALL of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

So, God sends us Jesus—to make our relationship with God ***right again***
 (Paul calls this ***justification***)—not by what we do, or our good works,
 but by our ***faith in, our trust in Jesus!***

Isn't that the story of ***grace***?
 Is that how you ***understand grace***?
 We still sin,
 It's our ***ongoing struggle*** as fallen people this side of heaven,
 but we live in ***freedom*** because of grace.
 Because of Romans 8:1: No condemnation.

Do you ***realize*** what Paul is saying?
 He's saying this is ***why Jesus came and died on the cross—***
to free us from sin!
 To take away all condemnation.
 To show us that God loves us unconditionally, and sets us free!
 Free from all condemnation, all guilt.
 Jesus came to show us that God's ***love and grace***,
 is ***stronger*** than sin and death,

and certainly stronger than our feelings of guilt.

Let me say that again, for it bears repeating:

God's grace is stronger than sin, or guilt.

Grace beats guilt.

Every time.

What do you ***think*** of that?

Do you ***believe*** it?

Isn't that an ***important*** concept for all of us to understand?

I know it is for me, what about you?

How many of us ***struggle with feelings of guilt and shame?***

As you sit here today,

can't you think of things that leave you feeling that way?

It's ***hard to leave the past***, in the past, isn't it?

Especially when we have made the ***wrong choices***—

by things we have done, or left undone.

I have always struggled with feelings of guilt about ***divorce***,
and what it has done to my kids.

Even when I understand the fact that my life is so much better now—

and I wouldn't have met my wonderful husband without the life I've lived...

I still struggle with the choices that were made that led to divorce, which left
lasting scars on all of us.

Even when you know it's the right choice, or the only choice,

I think it can still leave you feeling ***guilty. Ashamed.***

Who wants to be divorced?

And what about ***parenting?***

Aren't there things that you as a parent wish you had done differently?

Am I the only person that worries that I've permanently scarred my kids?

I doubt it.

I think we all have regrets.

Mistakes.

Things we wish we had said, or not said.

Done, or not done.

Jobs are the same, aren't they?

There are those **decisions** you make that sometimes you just wish you could take back, right?

And **friendships, and marriage.**

Those **words** that you wish you had never ever uttered,
those **situations** you wish you had never encountered.

We could all live in the **land of what if, and regret**, couldn't we?
Maybe you do live in that land.

But Jesus knows this about us.

He knows this about our human condition.

After all, we have ALL sinned and fallen short.

No one is righteous, not even one Paul says in Romans 3:10.

It's so true.

Which is why we **NEED this good news** from Romans 8 today!

Because Paul continues by saying,

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free** from the law of sin and of death, Romans 8:2.*

Verses 9 and 10 reiterate this:

*But you are not in the flesh; **you are in the Spirit,**
since the **Spirit of God dwells in you.***

10 *But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin,
the **Spirit is life** because of righteousness.*

It's pretty clear what sin and death mean,

but what is Paul talking about with the **flesh or the Spirit?**

Well, he's **NOT saying** that we are split personalities, or **dualistic** people—
with bodies that are bad and spirits that are good.

He's talking about **whom we serve.**

Our flesh, our human nature, is to serve **ourselves.**

That is sin, and it ultimately leads to death.

But through Jesus death and resurrection, we are free from that.

We can ***live in the Spirit***—the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who dwells within all Christians.

The Spirit ***serves God***.

And the ***Spirit brings us life***.

Remember last week I was comparing

Romans 7:15-25 with the ***12 steps*** of AA?

Paul was talking in Romans 7 about how hard it is to be good.

And I compared it to being ***like Tom*** in Tom and Jerry.

We want to do good, but we have the little angel and devil on our shoulder, and we give in to the little devil.

We want to do good, but we end up doing bad.

We can't even seem to do the good we want to do!

Who will rescue us from that, Paul asks?

Only ***Jesus***.

The 12 steps are so similar to the gospel,

because the first step is acknowledging that we are ***powerless*** over sin, and our lives have become ***unmanageable***.

So what next?

Step two says we

Believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

And ***step 3 is we***

Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

All of the 12 steps are about one thing—***choosing life, over death.***

Choosing life over sin.

Isn't Christian life that way?

We choose ***life over death.***

Christ over sin.

And by ***choosing a relationship*** with Jesus Christ,

By ***surrendering*** ourselves to his power,

We receive ***grace.***

And ***new life.***

We become **free** people---
 free from the ways of the world, the ways of our flesh.
 We are **free from all condemnation**.

We are free to **live in the Spirit**.
 We are free to be caught up in the Spirit of God at work in our lives,
 and our world.

Romans 3:23-24 says,
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came
by Christ Jesus.

What Jesus did for us is a gift my friends,
 A gift of **grace**.
 A gift of **life**.

Because of Him, there is now **no condemnation**
 for all of us who believe in Jesus Christ!
 No condemnation.
 No more guilt.

You know how at **Ash Wednesday** we write down a sin and nail it to the cross,
 remembering that Jesus took it away from us?

What if we do **something similar today**?
 You got a little slip of paper for hymn requests in your bulletin today,
 and you got a little pencil too.

I'm going to ask you to rip off half of that request paper,
 and do something different with it.
 Rip off half of it, and write down a sin for which you hold great regret.
 Guilt. Condemnation.
 And then I'm going to roll the trash can out to the center aisle,
 and ask you to come and just **rip up that paper**,
 and drop it into the trash as you say, '**No condemnation**'.
 We're going to take a few minutes to do just that.
 I'll even go first.

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Now that we have ripped up our sins as a sign of what Christ has done for us on the cross...***what are we free to do?***

Isn't that a great question?

What now, if we are free from guilt?

Rev. David Lose is the President of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and his blog and "Working Preacher" segments are some of my favorite theological reading online.

He writes about Romans 8:1. He says,

*Hanging beside the front door of a house in my neighborhood is a large mosaic that says, "Tell me what is it you plan to do with your **one wild and precious life**." Lose writes, I love that saying, and each time I pass by that door I get a shiver of anticipation about all this life holds and just what God might do through me. [What Will You Do...?](#)" David Lose, *Dear Working Preacher*, Sunday July 3, 2011.*

What a great question!

What about you?

What ***do you plan to do*** with your one wild and precious life?

Since you are free—free from guilt and condemnation.

What now?

What will you ***do***?

How will you ***live***?

It might take some time for this to ***sink in***.

That you are ***free from guilt and condemnation***.

But I encourage you to spend this week ***praying and talking*** to God about it.

Listening to what God has to say.

And asking yourself, how will I live, with this good news?

What will I do, now that I am free?

Friends, hear the ***Good News*** of the Gospel today,

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

And we are free-to live our one wild and precious life!

Praise be to God, and all the people said, Amen.