

# Romans 8:1-17 - No condemnation in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, Church. The reading is taken from Romans, chapter 8, verses 1 to 17. You find it on page 1134 of the Church Bible.

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 the sin and death.

For what the law was powerless to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires, but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

[ 1 : 22 ] The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh, but are in the realm of the Spirit.

If indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

[ 2 : 35 ] Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation. But it is not in the flesh to live according to it.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again.

Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

[ 3 : 41 ] If indeed we share in his suffering, in order that we may also share in his glory. Amen.

Thank you, Yvonne. I'm very conscious in mornings like this morning that the sermons on the book of Romans can sometimes be quite heavy-going.

Maybe you're not used to listening to sermons like this. And I know, because I've been sat where you are sat, that you come to church with lots of different things going on in your minds. Maybe lots of different things that have happened in the week.

Lots of different troubles that are going on in your minds. And you're wondering, you know, what's going to come out of the Bible that's going to speak to my situation? I have a conviction.

I believe it's a conviction from the Bible, which is that my job as a teaching pastor here is not so much just to give you kind of life tips vaguely from the scriptures, but rather to expose you to the rich truths of God's words.

My job to stretch you, not like physically, but like mentally. Yeah, because I think it's as our minds and our hearts grapple with the great truths of God's word that we find joy and growth and help for us as Christians, whatever situation we're in.

[ 4 : 51 ] So let's pray. Let's ask for the Lord's help this morning. Heavenly Father, we are so very conscious this morning of our need of your help and your mercy and your blessing.

We know, Lord, that there are many things to distract us. There are many things going on in our minds and our hearts already. And Lord, we want to hear you from your word.

We want you to address us and speak to us. We want to hear and understand. So, Lord, please be at work. Help me, help all of us for the sake of your glory and for our good.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. I think there are two lies that the Christian hears whispered in their ears on a frequent basis.

If you're a Christian this morning, you'll recognize these lies, I'm sure. The first lie is a concern that Jesus couldn't possibly save someone like you or like me.

[ 5 : 49 ] The lie goes something like this. I mean, really, Steve? Jesus knows everything that you've done. Jesus knows every secret thought that you've had. He knows every hidden desire of your heart.

He knows every dark ambition. He knows things about you that nobody else in the world knows. And you think he would forgive you. Really?

Says the lie. With all your sin? Surely not. Surely not. Now, if you manage to get past that thought, then the other lie comes.

It's slightly different. And it goes something like this. Okay, maybe I grant you that Jesus is sufficient even to save somebody like you, Steve. Even somebody as bad as you could be saved by Jesus. But I'm pretty sure he regrets it.

You know, you're a terrible Christian. I'm sure when God was choosing you, like Andrew started our service with, to be one of his chosen people, I'm sure he wished that you were better than you actually turned out to be.

[ 6 : 53 ] You know, you pray so little. You give so little. You secretly harbour bitterness. You've missed opportunities to share the gospel all the time. You're so slow to feel the joy of the gospel.

Well, I mean, really, you might not even be a Christian the way you feel. You might perhaps scrape into heaven, but I'm sure God is annoyed by you. Disappointed. Despairing. Now, listen, I guarantee that if you've been a Christian any time at all, you will have heard those lies, one or both of them.

They might even be being whispered in your ear right now as we look at God's word. And that is why Romans chapter 8 verse 1 is so important and loved by Christians.

Because it says, to those lies, therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Now, just hear that with me for a moment.

Just listen to that. No condemnation. It doesn't say slightly less condemnation than you might be expecting. It says no condemnation.

[ 7 : 54 ] It doesn't say, okay, some condemnation because you were a little bit of a letdown. It says no condemnation. I've been so wicked.

I've wandered so far from the Lord. My thoughts are all over the place. No condemnation, it says. No condemnation. But I struggle so much. I'm a terrible Christian. My holiness is in tatters.

No condemnation, it says. Now, in a way, we could just stop there. We could just sit there and just bask in that thought.

Me. You. With all my weakness. All my sin. All my brokenness. All my frailty. With all the slow progress in the battle against sin. I am not condemned.

Not by God. God is not my accuser. But the thing is, with a statement like this, it actually gets better and better the more you think about it and the deeper that you understand it.

[ 8 : 55 ] And so I want us to try and dive deep on this and understand exactly what he means by no condemnation and exactly how that works out in our lives. So let's think together a bit more about what condemnation means or no condemnation.

Think with me about what kind of condemnation Paul is talking about. I think you can identify at least two kinds of condemnation. So firstly, think about somebody in the dock in a criminal court. Right. They've been found guilty. And they are about to be condemned to be punished for the crimes that they have committed. Now in our new TV era, if it's a particularly heinous crime, you get to watch the judgment on TV as the judge in his funny wig pronounces judgment on the guilty. He will read out a list of the crimes which they've committed and will tell them how many years they are due to spend in jail and how long it will be before they are eligible for parole. That is

condemnation.

Right. The condemnation of a judge. That's the most common one, isn't it? But there is another kind of condemnation. So think not so much now about a courtroom, but think about a school room.

[10:03] Right. This school, they've got a student who pays no attention, who never does their homework, who messes around. They fall in with a bad crowd. They fail their exams.

They bounce out of school with no experience, no references, no qualifications, no sense of direction. They find it almost impossible to get a job. They have no clue what to do with themselves. Now, you might say, you probably wouldn't put it this way, but you might be able to say that their bad performance at school has condemned them to a life of frustration and lostness, that they could have been spared if they'd only changed their ways at school.

They are condemned.

They're condemned for ourselves and not for him. Romans put it like this in chapter one. Although we knew God, we neither glorified him nor gave thanks to him. But in our thinking, we became futile. And for that, we are condemned, condemned to die, condemned to be eternally separated from the blessings and kindnesses of God.

But we also face another kind of condemnation that Romans talks about. God not only pronounces a future judgment in the court of God, but he also talks about a present judgment, about a being handed over to the futility of life lived without him.

[11:47] So he says that we are condemned to live a futility where we are unable even to live up to our own moral standards and expectations, let alone God's.

We find ourselves thinking and behaving in all sorts of ways of which we're ashamed. Over time, we find that bitterness and anger grow in our hearts more easily than patience or kindness.

You know, life becomes frustrating and we're sort of condemned to live in the mess that we make. We know only too well, don't we, what that feels like.

And the question for us as we come to Romans chapter eight, verse one is when Paul says no condemnation, what kind of condemnation is he talking about? Does he mean, listen, you are free in the court of God from final judgments?

That's justification. Or does he mean you are free to live a life now today in a way that pleases God? That would be holiness or sanctification.

[12:49] Which is it? If you've been with us for any time in the series on the book of Romans, you'll know that the first one is certainly true. We've seen it over and over, haven't we? Romans chapter three, verse 23 says, All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Right at the heart of the book of Romans. That God the Son in human flesh takes our sin and bears its punishment while gifting to us his righteousness. So that in the dock before God, we are declared not guilty instead of guilty.

Because Jesus has taken our punishment. Even our passage this morning, look down at it. Verse three describes this. Jesus making the sin offering, he says.

Dying in our place so that verse four, the righteous requirement of the law, the standard for judgment day might be met. We are justified. But, and here's the thing for us this morning, I want to suggest to you that really Paul's focus, not his sole focus, but his emphasis at least, is not just freedom from this future condemnation, but is a freedom now, no condemnation to live a pointless, fruitless life.

It's freedom to live a life that pleases God. He's taking his aim, if you like, at that second lie that we were talking about. In other words, Romans 8 is saying to you and me, hey, listen, struggling Christian.

[14:17] Hey, Christian who's losing battles day in, day out with sin. Listen, Christian who's gone cold and who feels weary and distant from God. You, yes, you, whoever you are this morning, no condemnation.

Now, if you look at the passage carefully, you'll see that Paul makes that point by perpetually contrasting life before being a Christian with life after becoming a Christian. So he describes life before as being life according to the flesh, he calls it.

Where flesh is not supposed to be your skin and bones, it's rather shorthand for life lived for ourselves. It's the life of selfish sin, if you like. And he contrasts life in the flesh with new life by the spirit, a life that's led by God and lived to please him.

Look at verse five. This is how he puts it. Those who live according to the flesh have their mind set on what the flesh desires. But those who live in accordance with the spirit have their mind set on what the spirit desires.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

[15:28] Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh, but are in the realm of the spirit. Notice the contrast there.

Life of the flesh is controlled by sinful selfishness. It leads to death. It's hostile to God. It cannot submit to God's law. In the flesh, it's not possible to please God because we're so turned in on ourselves that any action that we do is away from God and towards ourselves.

So even our finest moral performance is really only ever for its own glory and gain. Condemned to futility. But, says Paul, the Christian isn't in that realm anymore.

They're not in the flesh. They're in the spirit. Their minds are set on what God the spirit desires.

They are governed by life and peace. In other words, the Christian is not only justified from judgment to come.

They are sanctified and made holy to live a life that pleases God now. Not as we saw last week that we are instantly morally perfect. We are, Romans 7, in a battle, aren't we?

[16:34] Romans 7 is really clear on that. Rather, the point is that everything that is needed to make you holy is yours already in Christ Jesus.

And you have him. And you have the spirit. I want to slow down on this for a moment. And I know I've spoken about this before. And I know maybe you've got a really clear grasp of this, right?

In which case, I'm wasting my time. But I cannot, honestly, I cannot overstate to you how important it is in your Christian life to be able to distinguish these two things and hold them together. Right?

To distinguish justification, the declaration of not guilty in the face of final judgment, and sanctification that you are set free to live a holy life. Both of those are yours in Christ Jesus if you're a Christian.

Both are through him and not you. Both are achieved by the cross. The grace that saved you in Christ Jesus from the penalty of your sin through his death on the cross, that grace also makes you holy.

[17:37] Sanctifies you. Sets you apart as holy to God. Not condemned to fight a losing battle with sin, but no condemnation to live a life that pleases him. Now, you cannot separate these two.

You cannot be justified without also being sanctified. Look at the end of verse 9. And you'll see how Paul describes that and saying it's impossible to be a Christian and not to have the spirit who sets you free, who makes you holy.

Listen to how he puts it. And if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, if they don't have the spirit enabling them to live a life that pleases God, if they're not like that, they're a second class Christian. No. What does he say? If they don't have the spirit of Christ, they don't belong to Christ. They're not his. Because without the spirit who enables you to live for Christ, well, you're not a Christian. You have not been justified if you're not also being sanctified.

You are either a spirit-filled Christian free to please God or you're not a Christian. Those are the two options. Now, even though you can't separate justification and sanctification, it's still really important that you do distinguish them from one another.

[18:46] They're not the same. Being declared not guilty in the face of final judgment is not exactly the same as life by the spirit. Now, let me try to underline this with an impossible but kind of fun story, right?

I want you to imagine that you have two sons, right? Two sons. And you give them the names justification and sanctification. Those are great names, by the way. If you ever have two sons and you want to think of names, call one justification and one sanctification.

Right? Now, you ask these two sons, you say, listen, boys, I want you to clean the bathroom for me. Right? Justification decides to go first. Justification loves you.

Right? Your relationship with justification is absolutely brilliant. There's no unspoken tension.

There's no past hurts. There's no unresolved issues. Everything's been dealt with. Right?

You're completely, you know, at one with each other. But justification on his own seems totally incapable of doing anything you ask him to do. He's hopeless. You know, he cleans the bathroom and does a terrible job.

[ 19 : 48 ] The mirror is smeared. There are still marks on the toilet. The shower looks like a dog's been bathed in it. Right? And you're shocked. Wait, this makes no sense. You love me. We have no unresolved issues. You walked out of the bathroom and gave me a great big hug.

Yet you seem to have made zero attempt to actually clean the bathroom. It's like you're incapable of doing what I've asked. Then sanctification has a go. Right? Sanctification is a great worker. Right? Brilliant worker. But he doesn't really love you. Right? He's pretty self-interested. So he cleans the bathroom and he does a brilliant job. You know, you could eat a dinner off the shower. Right? You could drink the toilet water. That's how clean it is. It's amazing. But when he comes out of the bathroom, he says, that's 150 quid, please. What? What?

What do you mean? I don't pay you to clean the bathroom that you use. You know, you should clean it because you're my son and because we live in the same house and because you love me. Now that you've asked for money, really, it's kind of no better than if you'd not cleaned it at all.

[ 20 : 53 ] Now, of course, that's an impossible story. Why is that an impossible story? Well, because, listen, the son who loves you is also the son who wants to please you. And the son who wants to please you is also the son who loves you.

So, really, justification and sanctification, they're conjoined twins, aren't they? They do it together. They do it together. They are distinct from one another, but they are inseparable.

They clean the bathroom without seeking payment because they love you and they want to do a good job. Now, that's the point here. You are justified and you are sanctified and those two are joined together.

There is no condemnation in judgment, no condemnation in life by the Spirit. Now, some of you are thinking, wow, you've made something that was really great, really confusing.

Why are you making it so complicated, Steve? Well, listen, if you get this, this is the joy of this sentence, right? This is the joy of it. If you thought, listen, this no condemnation is just about final judgment, right?

[ 21 : 52 ] It's not really about my life now. It's just about final judgment. Let me tell you, you would be missing the joy of this. Because if it's only saying that there's no condemnation in final judgment, but you're condemned to live a life of futile pointlessness, where you just lose the battle with sin over and over and over again, then actually the Christian life is miserable and terrible.

If you thought that no condemnation was just about being liberated to live a life that pleased God, you might think that the point of living a life to please God was to justify yourself, right? As if, if only I do enough things to please God, then he will justify me.

But that is also the recipe for misery, right? That's why so many religious people are desperately sad. Because they are trying by their sanctification to earn their justification.

But actually they have both together. They are conjoined twins. You can distinguish them, but you cannot separate them. They are yours together. No condemnation, he says.

Praise God. Paul is a brilliant pastor here, right? He's got his arm on your shoulder and he's saying to you, listen, Christian friend, he says, I can see that it's tough for you, right?

[ 23 : 05 ] I can see your battle scars. I know your mistakes. But you do know, don't you, brother, sister, you do know there's no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

And you say, oh yeah, yeah, I know, Paul. I know I'm forgiven of my sins. I learned that in Sunday school. That's Christianity 101, isn't it? I know I'll be safe on judgment day. And he says, no, you know it.

There's more to it than that, right? You know also in Christ you're made holy. You're sanctified. You know that the spirit is making you into what you already are in him, don't you?

You can see, can't you, that your great achievements in life are not your fancy car or your great reputation. Actually, the great achievement in your life is that you're ongoingly repentant and putting your faith in Christ.

And you know that's not you doing that, don't you? That's the spirit at work in you. Your passion to live for Jesus. You didn't do that. Change is possible.

[ 24 : 03 ] Progress is possible. Everything you need is yours. And ultimately, perfection in the presence of the Lord in glory is inevitable. Look at how he summarizes it. Verse 10. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the spirit gives life because of righteousness.

And the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his spirit who lives in you.

Perhaps you can just imagine two alternative futures, right? One is outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, where you're not a Christian. Maybe this is you this morning.

Perhaps you're not a Christian. If you're not a Christian, you know, don't you, that the best saviour that you have is only yourself, right? And you know, if you're really honest with yourself, that you're not really that good a saviour because you cannot change yourself.

Not more than superficially. So you face the prospect, don't you, of growing sin. Not just lifelong struggles with bitterness or anger or impatience or unkindness or selfishness or lovelessness.

[ 25 : 15 ] You know, those are not just your temporary enemies for now. Those are your eternal enemies, aren't they? They will grow and grow in you. It's worse, isn't it, than becoming a grumpy old man or a bitter old man.

You become an eternally grumpy, bitter old man. And that's condemnation. But it's nothing less than all of us deserve.

But here's the no condemnation alternative. Turn from your sin. Turn to Christ. Put your faith in him and his grace and mercy. Receive forgiveness from him and new life by the Spirit.

And then, yes, you face a lifetime of struggle against sin in the battle that we described last week. Fighting selfishness and bitterness and impatience and unkindness. But not in your strength, but in the Spirit's strength.

By the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you. And your path will be a path of real change and transformation. As bit by bit, he works within you to make you the person that you already are by his grace and his mercy.

[ 26 : 16 ] Not a bitter old man. Not an eternally bitter old man. But a joyful man or woman. Eternally safe. Eternally perfect.

In the presence of the God who loves us. So we sing that old hymn, don't we? Oh, that day when freed from sinning. I shall see thy lovely face.

Full arrayed in blood-washed linen. How I'll sing thy sovereign grace. Come, my Lord, no longer tarry. Bring thy promises to pass. For I know thy power will keep me till I'm home with thee at last.

No condemnation. Let's just end by thinking about how this works out in practice for us. With a new obligation at the end of the passage. We're going to deal with this more briefly.

But if you look down at verse 12, you'll see that there's a second therefore in the passage. This marks out a division in the passage. So he started with a therefore at the beginning.

[ 27 : 13 ] And now there's one in verse 12. So if you're not condemned to a futile life of growing sin, but are genuinely being changed by the Spirit, what should life look like for you?

What are you supposed to be doing? Look down at verse 12. Let me read the verses to you again. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation. But it's not to the flesh to live according to it. If you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Here it is then. This new life is ours.

We have a new obligation because of it. The obligation is to live the new life that is ours. And living the new life involves killing off the twitches of the old sinful nature, the misdeeds of the body, as he puts it.

It's as if in becoming a Christian you're handed the keys to a whole new way of living. And you're encouraged, aren't you, not just to stare at the keys and go, oh, that's a nice set of keys, but actually to put them in the ignition, start the car, enjoy the ride, leaving behind the desires of the flesh at the side of the road.

[ 28 : 18 ] So if you're a Christian this morning, can I encourage you to do this? This is the life that is yours by the Spirit. You have been enabled by the Spirit to kill the flesh's desires.

You don't have to follow them anymore. You can live by the Spirit. You can repent. You can believe. You can take up your cross. You can lay down your life. You can follow Christ. You can enjoy this new desire to please God.

You can live by it. You can feed it. You can follow it. You can find great joy in it. And in doing that, what you will find is that not only do you have a new life, but you also have a new identity.

Look down at verse 14. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again.

Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father. This is brilliant.

[ 29 : 23 ] No condemnation. No condemnation means you are justified and you are sanctified. And being justified and being sanctified means you are adopted.

You are a child of God. So the Spirit doesn't make you a slave to God in the way that we were slaves to sin, but makes us sons of God. Adopted into his family.

Crying out to him, Abba, Father. Not in a kind of childlike daddy kind of way, but in the confidence of a child who knows he belongs. Who knows he's loved.

Look at verse 16. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs. Heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. This is how this works, right? The Spirit of God speaks to our hearts, our spirit, telling us that the gospel promises are ours.

[ 30 : 25 ] This isn't the Spirit kind of just whispering weird stuff in your head, right? No, this is God by the Spirit saying, listen, that no condemnation stuff, that's yours.

That promise, it's yours. It belongs to you. That word of reassurance, that future glory of Jesus Christ, that's yours, he says.

You're a co-heir with Christ. You see, here we've come full circle, haven't we? We started, didn't we, with these lies that are whispered in our ears by the devil himself. You a Christian, really?

You a Christian? Heaven, but are you sure? Yes, I'm sure, says the Spirit. The promise of God says so. But you're a terrible Christian. I am not a terrible Christian.

The Spirit tells me I'm a saint. Glory bound. Spirit led. I'm a child of the King. There's no condemnation for me.

[ 31 : 26 ] Shouts the Spirit to my spirit. Let's pray as I close. Heavenly Father, it is hard to imagine that there could be any better news for us to hear this morning.

That in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. How we thank you and praise you for all that that means.

That not only are we and will be safe in final judgment, but we are now given a new life by the Spirit so that we, even us, even me, can live a life that pleases you and brings you glory.

That you look at us. That you look at us and you're not frustrated. You're not annoyed. But you see us wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus, filled with your Spirit, repenting and believing the gospel. And you say, that is my child. I love them. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for these great truths.

[ 32 : 47 ] Help us, we pray now, to rejoice in them and delight in them. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.