

Lent 3
March 4, 2018

Romans 8:1-10
385-401-397/393-379

Lent – “No Condemnation!”

- I. A blessed fact “for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- II. A life-changing fact – “God’s Spirit lives in you.”

Dear Christian friends,

I hope you realize that the CHAPTER AND VERSE **markings** in the Bible are not a part of God’s **inspired** Word. They were added later to **make it easier** to REFERENCE and look up Bible passages. Unfortunately **some** of those CHAPTER BREAKS **make no sense**. They break up the CHAIN OF THOUGHT. We have an example here.

In **chapter 7** Paul wrote about his EVERYDAY Christian life and HOW PATHETIC it was. You know the words and the FEELING! ***“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing.”*** Looking over his Christian life Paul exclaims, ***“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*** He then immediately adds, ***“Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*** That’s the end of chapter 7 but NOT THE END of Paul’s point. ***“So then, there is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***

That’s the message of Lent – the meaning of Jesus’ cross, isn’t it? There are NO SWEETER words than, ***“There is now NO condemnation.”*** That that ***“NO condemnation”*** is 1)a blessed fact ***“for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** It is also 2)a life-changing fact – ***“God’s Spirit lives in you.”***

I. A blessed fact “for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

As I read that OT reading – did those **10 Commandments** make you wince or did you just sit there thinking, “AIN’T GONNA happen, God”? Those commandments are DIRECT ORDERS from God – not hints on how He WOULD LIKE us to live. As the Israelites stood at the base of Mt. Sinai and heard God speaking those words, ***“There was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain - Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently - the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder.”*** Do you get God’s point? God MEANS BUSINESS!

AS A PART of your **daily devotions** this week get out your **catechism** and read through the commandments and their passages. HONESTLY compare your life – your **words** – thoughts – actions – your attitude – **morals** – **values** with what GOD DEMANDS with each particular commandment. CHEW especially on that **very first** one – ***“You shall have no other gods.”*** God is to ALWAYS COME FIRST in our lives – no exceptions or **excuses**. God will not settle for A PLACE in our lives – it’s first place ALL TO HIMSELF.

Being honest about our **sins** and the ETERNAL **condemnation** that we deserve we will savor those words, ***“There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** That ***“NO condemnation”*** is not because of ANYTHING WE do but solely and only because of WHAT JESUS has all done for us. This ***“NO condemnation”*** is TRUE ONLY for ***“those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** ALL others still fall under God’s condemnation. Paul EXPLAINS.

“What the law was unable to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did, when He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin.” The commandments can NEVER SAVE anyone. Born sinful – cursed with **sinful natures** that hate God – NOBODY could ever perfectly

obey the commandments. **God's law** can only condemn us a SINNERS DESERVING hell's **eternal punishment**.

But **what we could never do** JESUS CAME and did for us. **Jesus** – God's own eternal Son born a true man yet WITHOUT a **sinful nature**. IN OUR PLACE and giving us all the credit Jesus PERFECTLY obeyed every commandment His whole life through. Then came Good Friday and the cross. **"God condemned (our) sin in His (Jesus') body."** Bearing the blame and the **burden** of ALL sins of ALL people Jesus went to His cross and there HE was condemned and punished for all those sins. There Jesus **"paid the wages"** of our sin with His own innocent sufferings and death. There Jesus sacrificed His perfect life as **"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** From that cross Jesus cried out in triumph, **"It is finished!"**

"There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" – those who believe in – who are relying on Jesus – as their Savior. Jesus' blood has **"cleansed us from ALL sin."** We've been clothed by faith with Jesus' **righteousness** – His **perfect** life. God now looks at us THROUGH Jesus and He sees ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to **"condemn"** in us. God sees us as His **dear children** FIT TO LIVE with Him forever in heaven.

This is ONLY TRUE **"for those who are in Christ Jesus."** Saying I'm a Christian doesn't mean I AM a Christian. Knowing Jesus with my HEAD is not the same as **trusting** Jesus with my HEART. How we ever need to BE ON OUR GUARD that Satan doesn't rob us of our Christian faith – that **"the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth"** don't choke out our Christian faith and ROB us of eternal life. How we need to REACH OUT to those who **don't know** about Jesus – who have fallen away from Jesus. ONLY by continuing to trust in Jesus as our Savior is **"there now NO condemnation."**

"There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That is a blessed fact AND...

II. A life-changing fact – "God's Spirit lives in you."

TRUSTING in Jesus as our Savior Paul explains that we NO LONGER **"walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit."** Being a Christian is a HEART- and LIFE-CHANGING fact. Paul told the Corinthian Christians, **"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"**

Paul spells out HOW DRAMATIC and TOTAL this change is. **"To be sure, those who are in harmony with the sinful flesh think about things the way the sinful flesh does, and those in harmony with the spirit think about things the way the spirit does. Now, the way the sinful flesh thinks results in death, but the way the spirit thinks results in life and peace. For the mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God."**

All people are CONCEIVED and **born sinners**. All people are cursed with a sinful nature that hates God – that sees God as the **enemy** – that ONLY LOVES to ignore and defy its Creator. The sinful nature sees God AS THE PROBLEM **not sin** as the problem. ALL UNBELIEVERS have only a sinful nature. ALL CHRISTIANS have both a sinful nature and a **"new man"** – the Christian in us who LOVES God and who wants to thank and serve God BY LIVING a **God-centered, God-pleasing** life. The **sinful nature** and the **Christian in us** are in CONSTANT conflict with each other. EGGED on by the **devil** and the **sinful world** we live in the sinful nature is ALWAYS TRYING to retake control of our lives and push God out of our hearts.

That battle rages EVERY DAY of our **Christian** life. It's a battle over WHO CONTROLS us – whom are we going to serve – **God** or our **sinful nature**? TO LET the sinful nature control us – to LIVE TO

PLEASE the sinful nature - **“results in death”** and **eternal condemnation** in hell. **To let** the Holy Spirit control us – to LIVE TO PLEASE God – **“results in life and peace”** eternal in heaven.

God allows NO COMPROMISING here – no give and take with the sinful nature. We can't live AS UNBELIEVERS and still think we're **Christians**. We CAN'T BOTH cuddle up to our sinful natures and **“crucify”** them at the same time. We CAN'T BOTH cater to our sinful natures and **“deny ourselves”** at the same time. We CAN'T BOTH live IN DEFIANCE of God and still claim to **love** and **trust** God. We can't please BOTH GOD and our sinful natures at the same time.

That's not to say people WON'T THINK or TRY that. It's **sadly** QUITE COMMON and accepted. **People think** they can live together without being married and STILL BE Christians. **People think** they are Christians but they DON'T NEED **God's Word** or **church**. People think God will accept SECOND place in their hearts – think they can SET THE TERMS for **their relationship** with God – “God, THIS IS HOW we're going to do things.” **People think** God will understand and accept their **pet sins whatever** they may be because they're basically good, decent people. THAT'S **“the mindset of the sinful flesh,”** Paul explains and then WARNS, **“Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God.”**

SO are you now beginning to think, “AM I **really** a Christian?” Are you bothered by HOW OFTEN you see yourself giving in to your sinful nature? GOOD! That should bother us and lead us to **cry out** FROM THE BOTTOM of our hearts, **“God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”** And having prayed that WHAT JOY to read again, **“There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

“NO condemnation in Christ Jesus.” Isn't it so fantastic that we REGULARLY BEGIN our **worship service** with a confession of sin? We drop our excuses – we're honest with God and ourselves ABOUT BOTH our sin and what we deserve – and God answers us with the PROCLAMATION of His **full and free forgiveness** in Jesus. We are assured, **“There is NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

“NO condemnation.” Is that the message and blessing of our Lord's Supper? Here's the VERY PROOF of **“NO condemnation!”** With simple bread and wine Jesus gives us the VERY SAME body and blood He gave into death on the cross **“for the forgiveness of sins.”** Come again to this Supper and hear your Savior PERSONALLY tell you, **“My body – My blood – give and shed FOR YOU. There is NO condemnation** in you.”

God wants us convinced that **“NO condemnation”** is a BLESSED FACT **“for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** The MORE SURE and focused we are on that **the more** the Holy Spirit works to CHANGE our lives by that truth. Amen.

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