

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation
TITLE: No Condemnation
SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:1-2
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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

Maybe you've heard the old saying "You can't judge a book by its cover." This is strange on a few levels. First of all, because not only *can* we, but we *do* all the time. We quickly assess the exterior of something and determine whether or not it meets our personal standards. And far worse than books, we do this to people as well. We often think about people as how rich, smart, or strong they are. We judge people based on our preferences, and we condone or condemn people based on our opinions.

But what about when God looks at your life? If your life is a book, is there any discrepancy between the cover and the content? And what does God think about it? It is Gospel 101 to know and believe that if you are trusting Jesus for life and salvation, God doesn't condemn you because Jesus has been judged in your place! But... There's still a catch.

Sometimes life feels uneven or out of step. We may know we're a part of God's family, but at the same time, we struggle to live like that's true. We may mentally know that God loves us, but sometimes we live as though we have to earn his love. And when this happens, what does God think of us? If you're a Christian, and Jesus is the new book jacket on the story of your life, how does God think about that book if and when the content isn't consistent with the new cover? And not only that, but what is God (and what should we be) doing about it? These are the things that Paul addresses in Romans 8:1-2.

When Paul says there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," he's borrowing from his own language in Romans 5. And in Romans 5, it is because of Jesus that we are no longer condemned. But here in Romans 8, Paul says that there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus *for* the law of the Spirit of life has set us free." So, what is that reason that we are not condemned? Is it Jesus? Or is it the Spirit? Paul's answer is "Yes!" And this implies that:

There is a *no condemnation* that is real, and there is a *no condemnation* that you feel.

The "no condemnation" that is real is the one that is forever settled for all eternity because of what Jesus has done for us. We have been taken out of Adam and placed in Christ, the Second Adam, who has come to reverse the curse of the First Adam. But what do we do when we, whether by others or by law or by life inconsistencies, feel condemned? What should we do then, when the Christ is the cover of our life

isn't consistent with the content? And that's Romans 8:2: "The law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

There's a *no condemnation* that is real, and there's a *no condemnation* that you feel. The one that is real is because of the work of Jesus on the cross, and the one that you feel is because of the work of the Spirit in your life.

Meaning, the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians as the means through which we're supposed to live in right relationship with God because of Jesus. God is re-making and re-creating his world through Jesus (the Second Adam), and the way this new creation advances is for all those in Christ to be yielded to, open to, and obedient to the guidance of the Spirit of God in their lives.

The law can't create integrity in our lives. It can make the lines run parallel between the cover and the content of the book of our lives. Only the power and presence of God's very own Spirit can mold us, mature, and shape us into Christ-likeness. He is the one who causes us to *feel* the reality of "no condemnation" in our everyday lives. But how does this happen? How can we sense more of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Here are six suggestions:

1. Read Scripture
2. Hate sin
3. Exercise your gifts
4. Embrace suffering
5. Sing loud
6. Serve others

These are all ideas that Paul hints at elsewhere about how the Spirit moves and works in our lives. And these are clear ways to FEEL in the present what is REAL for all eternity, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This isn't about your best life now, this is about – by the Spirit – living in the freedom of *no condemnation*.

So, what is God's perspective when the book of your life has inconsistency between the cover and the content? "None! Zero! There is now no judgment for those who are in Jesus because Jesus has been judged in your place!" But there's more. "No condemnation" is not primarily a category to be in or out of. It's a relational reality to be experienced. And God's perspective is that through his Holy Spirit, he is continually stretching us and growing us as Christ lives his life through us.

For Discussion —

1. Personally, what stood out to you the most from this sermon?
2. In the past, how have you thought about the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?
3. Under what circumstances are you most tempted to feel condemned or judged?
4. Who is someone that you know that has a simple yet powerful relationship with the Holy Spirit?
5. Name one or two of the six suggestions about sensing the Spirit that you'd like to be more intentional about. Why?
6. How should these ideas about "no condemnation" and feeling the Spirit's presence cause us to think differently about others?