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## **In Christ, No Condemnation**

By the late: C. D. Cole

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

The theme of the eighth chapter of Romans is the everlasting security of the believer in Christ. It begins with no condemnation and ends with no separation. There is no condemnation in Christ, and no separation from Christ; therefore, the believer is forever saved and safe.

This is a grand sentence. There is no condemnation in Christ. The saint ought to shout in his soul every time he reads it. There is a painting somewhere called, "Waiting for the Verdict." It is a courtroom scene. Every face in the picture shows intense interest, as the verdict is awaited. There is fear approaching anguish written upon the face of the prisoner at the bar. There is awful anxiety of suspense on the part of the wife and friends around him. It is a sad picture. But, as Spurgeon suggests, another picture might be painted of "The Favorable Verdict Received." The prisoner is acquitted! Joy fills the courtroom! There is handshaking and hugging! The accused but now justified man is receiving congratulations from all sides. From the role of a prisoner, he walks out to enjoy the freedom of no condemnation. It would be a happy picture.

This is a bold statement. "There is no condemnation." There is no hesitancy, no beating

about the bush, no hope so, in the statement. Paul speaks with mathematical certainty. He employs cool calculation. "This is no raving of fanaticism, but the unquestionable deduction of fair argument: if Jesus was condemned in my stead, there can be no condemnation for me" (C. H. Spurgeon). If Jesus Christ bore the punishment for my sins in His own dear body, then it is certain that I will not have to bear them in my own puny body.

This is a broad assertion. "There is no condemnation." No condemnation for any sin I ever did commit; no condemnation for any sin I ever will commit; no condemnation at any time or any place; no condemnation for sin of any color or size or age. Further on in the chapter, Paul "mounts the high horse," and exclaims, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." As the mind of the apostle revels in the gospel of "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures," he makes heaven and earth and hell ring with his daring challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" Where there is no condemnation there can be no just punishment.

We have in the text and context some blessed and glorious things. May we ponder them to God's glory and to our profit.

I. THE BELIEVER'S HAPPY CONDITION—"NO CONDEMNATION." Condemnation is a sad word. It reminds us of a court where indictments are returned and defense is made. See that scaffold yonder. It has been erected for a condemned man. See the man as he is led, almost carried, to its platform. He is made to stand on a small trap door. The minister prays; the hangman fastens the noose around his neck and adjusts the black cap; the sheriff springs the trap; the poor man plunges through the open door, hanging helplessly by the neck, and is dead in a few minutes. Why was that awful thing done? The man had been condemned by a human law. He was paying the penalty for his crime.

You have observed men in stripes working by the side of the road as you have driven along the highway. They do not salute you because of their shame. They are marked men. They do not draw any wages. They work at the point of a gun, and are watched as a beast of prey would be watched. What does it mean? Why treat men so cruelly? Those men have been condemned by a human law, and are serving sentence for their crime.

Yonder at the penitentiary is a small, uninviting room; no furniture save one queer looking chair. A man is brought into that room by armed men and placed in that chair. He is strapped in that chair by strong cords. The top of his head has been shaved and to that bald spot a steel plate is fastened. A man throws a switch and fire races to every nook and corner of his quivering flesh. What is it all about? Why is the man so severely punished? He has been condemned by a human law, and is paying the penalty for his crime.

These illustrations relate to condemnation and punishment for crimes against human society. There are many law abiding citizens who are never condemned and punished by human society. But there is a divine government against which every man has sinned. With respect to sin, James says, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). God is the Supreme Judge of all the earth. His justice is terrible to His foes. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies" (Ps. 97:2,3). Those condemned by Him are awaiting a worse punishment than that of working on the road without pay, or of suffering physical punishment by hanging or electric chair. Never rescued from their sins, their portion is to be eternal torment in a lake of fire.

Our text tells of a way of escape from divine condemnation. It tells of a plan of salvation—the way to have condemnation cancelled—the way to a favorable verdict. It announces a happy condition before God, the Supreme Judge.

1. This is a present condition. "There is now no condemnation." The believer does not have to wait until he dies to escape condemnation. The moment he believed he passed from death (condemnation) unto life (justification). "There is now no condemnation." There had been condemnation, but none now. They were once cursed by the law and ruined by the fall, but not now. The verdict of guilt had once sounded in their ears, but that harsh sentence has been superseded by the glorious news of "no condemnation."

2. This is an eternal condition. No change back to condemnation will ever be suffered. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance, that is, without any change or recall on His part. Romans 11:29. Our Lord said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation" (John 5:24). This is plain enough. Paul says that the justified will be glorified, yea, in the purpose of God, they are already glorified. Romans 8:30. All who are delivered from the penalty of sin shall be delivered from the very presence of sin. Every vestige of sin and shame will be blotted out forever; holiness and glory shall be the heritage of the saints forever.

II. THE BELIEVER'S BLESSED POSITION—"IN CHRIST JESUS." It is the believer's position in Christ and not his character and conduct that makes him safe. There is no justification before God by human conduct, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20). "In Christ Jesus" is the only safe position.

To be in Christ means to have our standing in Him before God. It is to have His mediatorial perfections as our possessions before the law of God. He is made unto us "wisdom from God, which is our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30, Weymouth's Trans.). There can be no condemnation to the man who has Christ's righteousness. To condemn the believer in Christ would be the same as condemning Christ. But how does a person get into Christ?

1. The believer is in Christ officially and eternally by the election of the Father. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:3,4). This pertains to God's secret choice and purpose, and no man knows anything about it until he is effectually called to faith in Christ. Acts 13:48 says: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." All believers were saints elect, and sheep elect, from the

foundation of the world. See also II Tim. 1:9.

2. The believer is in Christ effectually and actually and vitally through the work of the Holy Spirit. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). This verse tells us how the deliverance from condemnation came about. The agent of the freedom is the Holy Spirit. The ground of the freedom is the "life in Christ." The law of sin and death is the moral law of God, which requires perfect righteousness. We do not have this righteousness in ourselves, therefore, the law condemns us to death. The Holy Spirit makes us free from that law by putting us into Christ. The Spirit's way of salvation is to make us hope in Christ. The fleshly mind would have us hope in self.

3. The believer is in Christ experientially and judicially by faith. From our side we get into Christ by faith. To be in Christ by faith means that we renounce all faith and hope in our own righteousness and trust in His righteousness. We have to get out of self before we can get into Christ.

The Pharisee in the temple was not in Christ but in self as he boasted of his fine character and good deeds. Saul of Tarsus was not in Christ but in self when, as a self-righteous Pharisee, he started to Damascus to persecute believers in Christ Jesus. The poor publican was out of self and into Christ as he went down to his house justified. He condemned self and looked to the blood.

A man with his wife was visiting one of our government mints, a place where money is molded and stamped. A worker remarked that by dipping the hand in water, the hot, molten metal could be poured over the palm of the hand without injury. He asked the man if he would like to try it. "No, I'll take your word for it," the man quickly replied. The woman spoke up and said, "I'll try it." She plunged her hand in a pail of water and held it out while the white, heated metal was poured over it. Turning to the man, the worker said, "You believed; your wife trusted."

