

# No Condemnation

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

Condemnation is a terrible word; naturally, a terrible word; spiritually, unspeakable terrible. To be condemned by an earthly judge, to be sentenced to punishment, must be dreadful; but what is that compared with the awfulness of being charged by a just God with sin, arraigned to hear read out to you your sins, and also your condemnation; and for your conscience to ratify the severest sentence that may be pronounced by that just Judge, and to say you deserve it? This is condemnation that the law of God requiring perfection in the creature and not finding it, pronounces the creature dead, banished him "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." This is condemnation, to be cut off from the Source of goodness, of true life, of pure happiness; to be banished from the earth, to live for ever under the frown of God, under the curse of His law. And this condemnation every person in this chapel deserves; may none of us come into it. It will be just if we do, it will be what we deserve, if we come into it. The only person to blame will be self; God will be cleared, the law will be magnified, justice will be honoured, God's character absolutely clear in our condemnation, if we come into it. Condemnation is therefore the most fearful thing we can consider in respect of our state.

Now the apostle by the Holy Ghost makes this blessed declaration: that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." At this let us look; and in looking at the removal of condemnation, it will be needful for us to notice the great and glorious Justifier, and the ground and reason of justification itself. The Justifier of the ungodly is God. The ground, the reason of justification is the work of Christ. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:24) Justification is therefore a pronouncement in the conscience of a sinner through the vicarious Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." (Heb. 9:14) The sight of God is a wonderful sight, the sight of Him in His character as a Judge, and the sight of that Throne of light and glory on which He sits. If you get that sight, you certainly will sink in yourself, lay your hand on your mouth, and cry, "Unclean." You certainly will enter into Isaiah's experience and feelings when, having seen the Lord sitting on a Throne high and lifted up, and the seraphims, each covering his face with two of his six wings, with two of them covering his feet, and with other two of them flying, said he, "I am a man of unclean lips," and the reason given is "for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isa. 6:5)

Here is the source of all true conviction. Remember that. If you never see God in a discovery of Himself to you, you will never have true conviction. And if you do see God by such a discovery, nobody will ever be able to argue you out of your convictions. You will from the heart say, "Woe is me! I am undone, for I have seen the Lord." Some apprehension of God is given to the people of God, and thereby they come into condemnation. The removal of this awful state can only be by Him who by His law condemns you. And this is the mystery of God in salvation: that while He must condemn by the law, He removes that condemnation, and pronounces justification in the conscience. "It is God that justifieth....It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." (Rom. 8:33,34) And here I would say to you, this means an experimental dealing of God with

you, and an experimental dealing on your part with Him. You will speak to Him after He has spoken to you; you will come to Him after He has come to you; you will mourn before Him after you have seen a mourning Saviour, a groaning, dying Saviour. The removal of condemnation is by the vicarious offering of Jesus Christ by Himself without spot to God. That is the foundation. That, and that alone, is the efficient cause of the removal of sin and law and curse from a sinner. He who is brought to this, is brought to a good place. This removal of sin was effected by the death of Christ once and for ever. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14) "By one offering" He did it. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13:12) That is the only cause of the removal of sin, and justification. Here is the ground, here is the reason, here God and man can meet and never sunder. Here is the mystery of a divine smile, like a glorious, never setting sun, falling on the heart of a sinner. Here is the abiding Fountain of all true happiness; the title of a wretch to heaven; the cause of the change of state, the change of name, the change of relationship to God the death of Christ. We have many changes, many ups and downs, dark days, and days of bright shining; access to God, and a going out and not finding that access; many fears, some confidence; many wants, some prayers; some temptations; the flail of tribulation laid on by a divine hand, to separate the chaff and remove it from the wheat. But this, this is the unchangeable, immovable ground of all true hope of heaven; namely, that God "is the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;" (Rom. 3:26) that the efficient cause of justification is the death of the Lord Jesus. O how this shines in the heart when the Holy Ghost brings it! How this humbles the soul! How it reconciles a soul to God, reconciles it to a cross and a path of tribulation! So I would invite you to look very carefully into this great matter.

"There is therefore now no condemnation." The apostle, in announcing this wondrous doctrine, tells us something of how it has come to pass: "To them which are in Christ Jesus." To be in Christ Jesus, as also to be in the Father, are terms frequently used in the Scripture. To be in Christ is to be in Him, first, by eternal election and predestination. (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29) It is to be in Him, in the next place, when He was here; for every one represented by Him is in Him. As a nation is in those who represent it in Parliament; so the Lord's people, even more intimately, (for that is a feeble illustration) are in their Representative, and were in Him when He was here below. When He prayed, when He groaned, when He sweat blood, when on the cross, they were in Him. One when on the cross, one when in the tomb, one when He rose, one when He ascended into heaven they were in Him, their Head. Did this ever shine in your eyes, in your hearts? Union with Jesus Christ? represented by Jesus Christ? When He was on the cross, you there?

But the union here, this being "in Christ," is also experimental, as what follows shows: "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is a spiritual union, and is effected in the soul by the Holy Spirit's imparting to it spiritual life from Christ, and in due time by precious faith laying hold of a revealed Christ. Mark that. Christ is revealed, faith is drawn out; and as Favel says, "The little arms of faith open to embrace that blessed Lord." You will find it so in your own souls, if ever you get a revelation of Christ. A revelation of Him will effectually open the arms of your faith to receive and embrace Him. And how wonderful, how blessed it is to know what Paul says of Christ: "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification!" (Rom. 4:25) Now here is the beginning of peace, here is the Fountain of happiness, here is the Source of holiness Christ revealed, Christ made known, embraced, and loved. Blessed be God, this being "in Christ" is an experience; not a picture, not a theory, not an imagination, but a fact,

a spiritual truth. It is a being in Him by precious faith, whereby you find the efficacy of His blood on your heart and conscience, and so feel "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," keeping your heart and mind, raising you up above the world, above all flesh, above Satan, above every opposition and trial that may come.

Now the proof of this being "in Christ Jesus" is in what follows: "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The word "flesh" is here used in respect of the "old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." This is what is intended by the word "flesh" in this chapter. He who is in the flesh cannot please God, (Rom. 8:8) because he is "dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1) This is the sad case in which you are who are not born again; that is your woeful condition. Says the Spirit of you: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." No religion they can have, no good works they can do, no resolutions they can form, no state they can bring themselves into, will ever please God. They cannot please Him. God make you think of it. My dear friends who are in the flesh, morality many of you have, I hope all have, but it will not save you. Good it is for yourself, for your neighbour, but is not salvation. Aim at being moral, endeavour always to do what is right amongst your fellows, serve well, rule justly, behave uprightly, speak the truth, eschew all evil company. But when you have done all that, this is true, you cannot please God. Then you may say, "How am I to be blamed, if I have done my best? How can I properly be condemned?" This brings us to a great question. How came we to be as we are sinners? How came it to pass that we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity; (Ps. 51:5) so that in our very nature, all actions apart, we are condemned? The reason of it is this. We descend from Adam, we derive a sinful nature from him, through the Fall. We were in Adam when he was pure and upright, and being in him, were heirs to the benefits of all his purity and uprightness and conformity to the law of God, and heirs likewise to his punishment for departing from it. We have never quarrelled with our own being; that is, we have never by nature wished to be other than we are. You may have wished your circumstances were different and better, but you have not wished your nature to be holy, for you naturally love sin; you have not condemned yourselves before God, have you? Our union with Adam involved everything that relates to our lives in time and through eternity, unless we are cut out from him, and grafted into Christ. The flesh is an evil thing; it cannot please God. May the Lord teach you to know this, who at the present know it not, and bring you to cry for mercy, that your state may be changed, and your condemnation removed. Says Paul, they are condemned who walk after the flesh, but they are not condemned who walk after the Spirit.

What is it to walk after the Spirit? First, what shall we understand by the Spirit? The apostle is here speaking of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the living God, the Teacher of the saints, the Quickener of the dead, the Revealer of Christ, the Sealer of the saints unto the day of redemption; the One who only can apply the Scriptures and bring the atonement, and by it purge guilt from the conscience. What is it to walk after Him? To walk after the Spirit, as in this chapter it is said, is to "mind the things of the Spirit," to be concerned about them, anxious to know them. It is to pray for them, look after them, hanker after them, feel emptiness and vanity and deadness without them; to realize that if we have these things, we shall possess everlasting happiness. Do you walk after the Spirit?

Let me briefly particularize here. First, to walk after the Spirit is to be really concerned in His things; as first, concerned in His great work. And what is His great work in the church? It is to

quicken and take care of the sinner bought with blood. You believe in the Holy Ghost? "Yes," one may say, "I think I believe in Him." And what is your concern, your grief? You may say it is this, "I am afraid He will not have anything to do with me. I am afraid my bad heart, my hypocritical nature, my proud spirit, my unbending will, my lustful heart, I am afraid these things are so offensive that His divine Majesty will have nothing to do with me." Well, a good many are in heaven who used, while here, to think and feel the same things, and have the same fears. I have had the same fears many and many a time. O, but will He not come? Did He ever go to a pure heart after the Fall? Did He ever go to a supple will? to a clean man? Did He ever go to one who, before being born again, asked Him to come? Let us, as we can, honestly look the question in the face. Did this divine Spirit ever find a son of Adam on earth since Adam's Fall who was truly wanting Him, pure, upright, good, godly? No, not one. If you are convinced of sin, you will not quarrel with Paul in this Epistle when he speaks of both Jews and Gentiles, "that they are all under sin;" "their throat is an open sepulchre:" "their feet are swift to shed blood." (Rom. 3:13,15) You will not quarrel with him in those statements; and if that be true of you, and you are brought to flee for refuge to Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit has come to you just as He went to Saul of Tarsus, just as He went to Manasseh, and to all who are set forth in the Scriptures to be our examples and patterns, or for our encouragement.

When Christ ascended, He committed the church, the care of her, and her conduct, preservation, and teaching, to the Holy Ghost, who comes from Him. "I, going away," said Christ to His disciples, "will give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth; He shall come to you, and He shall abide with you for ever." (John 14:16,17) Dr. Goodwin strikingly says, speaking of the Spirit and His grace, "How wonderful that He should come and rake into the jakes and dunghills of our hearts!" and it is wonderful. Think of that Holy Spirit, ever with the Father and the Son, equal with Them, coming down into that heart that is like a cage of unclean birds your heart, poor sinner, and mine. Do you ever feel concerned about it? Do you ever pray with the psalmist, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me?" (Ps. 51:11) Can you honestly say to the Lord that you have no religion, and no hope of religion, but by the Holy Ghost; that if He be pleased to come and dwell in you and be with you, all will be well, but otherwise it must be ill with you? To walk after Him, is to feel after Him, want Him, pray to Him, hanker after His presence, and confess that you are blind and dead and ignorant, polluted and loathsome without Him.

To walk after the Spirit is to mind those things which He, being given by Christ and sent to a sinner, is to teach and reveal to the sinner. He is to teach and reveal some things. What those things are we are informed by Christ Himself, when, promising the Spirit, He said, "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16:14,15) That is what His business is with sinners. It is not to make them think something of themselves. If a man think himself to be something, he deceives himself. But the Spirit's work, when He has emptied a sinner, is to pour in mercy; when He has made a sinner know his ruin, to reveal in him the Saviour; when He has taught a sinner to feel his guilt, to bring the blood of Christ which purges the conscience from dead works. This is His work, and do you feel after it? Do you want it? Being right is a great thing; and you may be much more right than you feel to be. A man may be much more right than he realizes himself to be; but he wants to realize that he is right.

Now what does the Spirit do? Why, He fixes the heart on the atonement. Our dear, good hymn writer, Hart, says this, speaking to the Lord:

"My treasure is Thy precious blood,  
Fix there my heart; and for the rest,  
Under Thy forming hands, my God,  
Give me that frame which Thou think'st best."

Is that so with you? Is the atonement your centre, your plea, your argument, the reason you can sometimes present to the Lord why He should bless you, a piece of hell? Is that the reason? There is no condemnation to you. If you walk after this, there is no place in hell for you. The man who lives on this atonement of Christ, the man who pleads it, who feels there is nothing between him and hell but the blood of Christ, and wants nothing else to be there, that man has no condemnation. He may feel condemned, he often will; he will condemn himself, and perhaps wonder that God allows him to live; but there is no condemnation. Is the atonement great in your eyes? Does it shine upon your spirit sometimes? Does it raise you to a hope? Does it encourage you to pray? Does it, as it were, say to you, "All your badness is as nothing before God in view of the atonement?" Does it tell you that a bad heart and an impure life, such as you have lived, cannot shut out your soul from God, when the atonement is before and on you? Who walk "after the Spirit." Now here, in the conflict, one may say the apostle Paul's words used in another case may be accommodated: "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." (2 Cor. 10:3) Though we walk as men on the earth, if the atonement is before us, we do not war after the flesh, but struggle to get to God in the face of the flesh, in opposition to it. Poor sinner, this will help you whenever you see it, the blessed atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It will help you against your depression, help you in your providential conflicts and troubles, help you when sin is mighty, when it threatens destruction, when it clamours for indulgence; it will help you when you feel the defilement of your sins, help you when you feel far from God. As the Spirit opens this to you, it will say, "Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you." (James 4:8)

To walk after the Spirit is to attend to His merciful injunctions, some of which let me name to you very briefly. One is this, "Call upon the Lord in the day of trouble." To walk after the flesh is to try to get out of trouble, to manage it yourself, to philosophize about it, to scheme to get rid of it if possible, no matter how. To walk after the Spirit is to call on God's Name; and the Spirit does not give an injunction of this kind, without giving power to walk in it. No. He is "the Spirit of grace and supplications;" (Zech. 12:10) He pours the petitions in, and we pour them out. He dictates in the heart of a sinner how he shall approach the Almighty. He will set before you sometimes what will invincibly draw you to the Throne of grace; namely, He will show you what that Throne is, the Mercy-seat, covered with the cherubim, where God said, "I will meet with thee," the "glorious high Throne from the beginning, which is the place of our Sanctuary." This will be revealed. And what guilty wretch can ever keep away from that Throne when the Spirit reveals it? Prayer is like the breath of the soul when the Throne of grace is discovered by the Spirit. This is a divine injunction: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7) all your care, care of your soul, care of your body, care of your circumstances, of your family, of the church; if a member, the care of walking as you ought to walk; if a deacon, the care of behaving in your office as you ought to do; if a minister, the care of the pulpit; all your

care for time, care for eternity, care for the glory of God. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." And the Spirit opens this. You cannot express it, it is an unspeakable feeling, a peculiar drawing, an invincible attraction to the Lord, when the Spirit opens this wondrous, this "glorious, high Throne," high above reason, high above all human demerit, high above the reach of infidelity and devils, high in God's esteem, and high in the sinner's. "A glorious, high Throne from the beginning is the place of our Sanctuary." To walk after the Spirit is a great thing, a wonderful thing for a poor, sinful creature to walk after the Spirit, the Spirit the Leader, the Spirit the Drawer, the Spirit attracting and helping, helping the felt infirmities, walking alongside of the sinner in a gracious way of divine assistance. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities;" and He does it with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Rom. 8:26)

Sometimes this will be His blessed work. When you feel discouraged because of the way, and wonder how you must move and how you can move, He will show you the great Captain of your salvation, Jesus Christ, "the King of kings and Lord of lords." You will see Him, and in seeing Him, you see God: "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1) Seeing Him, you will see grace, see that plenteous grace with Christ is found; you will see righteousness, you will see mercy, mercy's fullness, mercy's sweetness, mercy's freeness, mercy's greatness, mercy's eternity. If you see Christ, you will see all that God can give, and that will make you walk after Him. Ah, we are very anxious sometimes about temporal things. But sometimes there is a feeling about eternal things that will swallow up all our interest about temporal things, and we can say, the one thing needful is to know Christ, to be found in Him; and that feeling is a very blessed one, very exclusive, very powerful.

"No condemnation." Let me, ere I close, draw your attention to that passage in Galatians where the apostle Paul, speaking of the graces and fruits of the Spirit, says, "Against such there is no law." I have thought it a most beautiful and remarkable passage.

Take a wrong feeling, take enmity against God, envy of some man, covetousness of something that God has not given to you. Against all these sins there is a law, and that law condemns you for those feelings. Take grace, it may be small in its measure in your heart; faith may be very feeble and ready to give out; hope very damped, you may be hardly able to discover it in your soul; love, it has waxed cold, zeal gone, prayer restrained; every gracious feeling that you have had in your soul gone. Now of these graces, and also of patience, humility, and other graces, says Paul, "Against such there is no law." What! Will not God condemn a weak faith? He may gently chide you, saying "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" But the very word would strengthen and encourage you. Will not the Lord condemn you because you have not much love? He will reprove its waxing cold, but He will approve of the love; He will not condemn you. So if you go through the fruits of the Spirit, you will find that word is good, "Against such there is no law." What the Spirit gives is holy, pure; what He gives glorifies God, and benefits you. "There is therefore now no condemnation" to a sinner who walks after the Spirit.

And yet that man who so walks will be very frequently condemning himself. "Our conversation is in heaven," (Phil. 3:20) says Paul. Yes, sinner. "Conversation" there does not mean talk only; there is plenty of talk, of religious lip, without a gracious heart; but "our conversation" our general demeanour and conduct in this world as we walk by faith, "is in heaven." "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," (Matt. 6:21) there will your affections be. If you have a

treasure on earth, your heart is not often away from it. And if you have a treasure in heaven, your heart will be there, there often. Is Christ that treasure? Is the Rose of Sharon that treasure? Is the Intercessor, the Mediator, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Redeemer, the Righteousness of the saints, the blessed Justifier of the ungodly, is He your treasure? Is He, in whom is all the beauty of heaven, all the life, all the light, and all the blessedness of the church is He your treasure? Is He whose Name is Jesus your treasure? Then says Christ, your heart will be with Him. You say, "Yes, sometimes I can truly say it is so, my heart is in heaven." You can say, I feel I can go along with Bunyan who, as he saw Christ in heaven, Christ his Righteousness, said, "My Righteousness is in heaven." Rich men have their treasures in their trunks; "My Righteousness is in heaven." That is walking after the Spirit. And says the Holy Ghost by Paul to such, "There is therefore now no condemnation." Conflict? Yes, as in the 7th chapter the apostle describes his own conflict: "The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Rom. 7:19) He was a wretched man, and cried, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24) But then he breaks out, "I thank God," and he continues in that strain, saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation I, an afflicted man, I, a poor, defeated person, overcome often by my sins and groaning under that defeat; I, who cannot do the good that I would, and am driven into the evil I would not, I say this, I thank God for the victory He gives me through Jesus Christ." And then said the Spirit in him, "Write this for the saints to come, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh,' who indulge not their sins, do not wilfully commit sin; 'but after the Spirit,' and long to be indwelt by Him, to be taught, guided, governed, blessed, and saved by Him. To them there is no condemnation." Well, look at your cases, "examine yourselves," see whether ye be in the faith. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor, 13:5) the Spirit is in you, and the Father is in you. May the Lord grant that we may be of this happy number, in conflict, and yet justified, without condemnation, in Christ Jesus.