

No Condemnation – Romans 8:1-4

Introduction – Reformation Day is celebrated on October 31st because, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, traditionally remembered as inaugurating the Protestant Reformation. A study of the Reformation of the 16th and 17th Centuries reveals that these Protestants, these Evangelicals were those who preached and believed the Good News and did so with a lively faith. The Reformers stood against the dead and immoral teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Ironically, the book of Romans was one of the main instruments of doctrinal recovery and spiritual revival while testifying against the church in Rome. At the heart of the recovery was the doctrine of free grace and the complete, finished, justifying work of Jesus Christ rendering the cry of “*no condemnation*” to all in Christ.

This Gift of the Book of Romans – In this magnum opus of Paul, he begins his sustained argument of salvation by grace through faith (Rom 1:16) by sharing the bad news first: the problem of sin runs deep across all humanity (Rom 1-3, see 3:23). God had promised to Abraham that he would be the heir of the world through God’s work of salvation by faith (Rom 4, see 4:13). God fulfilled that promise by giving us new life through Jesus Christ as the last Adam, bringing forth a new humanity (Rom 5, see 5:8, 18-19). This stupendous message of salvation by grace alone was sure to be twisted by sinful hearts and so Paul begins answering objections. If sin brings forth grace, shall we sin up a storm (Rom 6:1)? Paul replies that to receive Christ is to receive His death and so we are united with Him in His death and all His death means (Rom 6). Another objection: if salvation is by grace then had the law failed? Is the law sin (Rom 7:7)? Paul then explains that the law accomplished exactly what it was to do: reveal our sin and our inability to save ourselves (Rom 7). The law leaves us in our flesh utterly condemned (Rom 7:24).

There is Condemnation – Humanity is in quite a state then, left to itself. The declaration of “*No Condemnation*” is not a declaration that God was waiving off the necessary condemnation deserved. To simply say that there is no condemnation is to preach, as Charles Spurgeon referred to it, “*the old serpent’s gospel*.” The serpent, in the garden, said, “*You shall surely not die*,” and this was a lie which deceived Eve and led our first parents into the bondage of sin and death. Today, it is popular to preach the old serpent’s gospel, “*there is therefore now no condemnation to any person, however he or she may live*.” Maybe there is no immortal soul. Maybe there is no moral Judge. Maybe we will just come back to try again. Maybe there is no way to know; it’s too confusing, just wait and see. These are serpent-gospels.

There is Therefore Now No Condemnation (Rom 8:1-4) – But the clarion cry of the apostle was that we could know, we could be justified, we could hear the words, “*no condemnation*.” We could live in that state immediately, and it was for any sinner simply for the asking (i.e. Rom 10:9-10).

The Condemnation of Sin in the Flesh – Sin, your sin, was condemned in the flesh of Christ whom God sent “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*” (v3). He condemned that sin in the flesh of Jesus at His crucifixion. Why did He do this? Because “*the righteous requirement of the law*” required it (v4). There is a way that you can be completely free of condemnation.

For Those Who Are in Christ Jesus – The argument in vv1-4 is very tight and very condensed. Just as in Adam we sinned and therefore fell and were condemned; so in Christ we are justified. But how am I to understand this “*in Adam*,” and “*in Christ*” phrase? The answer is “*covenantally*,” but what does that mean? Those who are “*in Christ*” are those who “*do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*” (v1, 4). Verse 2 explains and expounds on the first: “*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death*” (v2). Therefore, to walk “*according to the flesh*” was to walk “*in Adam*” and it led only to condemnation, “*the law of sin and death*.” The law (v3, now speaking about the Torah) could not get us out of this state of condemnation because that was not its purpose; it was “*weak according to the flesh*.” God solved our condemnation problem by sending Jesus “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*” so that, as a human (though not fallen), He might be our sin-offering, fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law (v4). It was fulfilled “*in us*” (v4) because we were “*in Christ*” (v1) “*who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*.”

This is a description of the glorious doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Our sins were imputed to Christ because we were in Christ, and He bore the full payment for our sins in His death in the flesh. We died “*in Christ*” because He died and we were in Him. His righteousness, a perfect justification, was imputed to us because He was perfectly obedient to the law; we were in Him in His resurrection. We live and walk according to the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead and, back to verse 1, “*there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*.”

The Continual Work of Evangelical Reformation – This glorious truth is *not* the way of salvation; it *describes* the way of salvation, points us to the Way of salvation. Looking at the doctrines as salvation will bring death. Seeing them as the signposts to the Person of salvation and then going to Him – that is where you find “*no condemnation*” and only There.

Reformed Evangelicals means “Doctrine on Fire” – The Doctrines of Grace, the work and preaching of the Reformation, sparked a revival by the work of the Spirit, because they were received and celebrated with faith. When a people are given life in the Spirit in this way, they experience “*now – no condemnation*” which means no wrath, no guilt, no punishment. Instead, there is acceptance, favor, freedom, and holiness. There is life in Christ Jesus.