

NO CONDEMNATION

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1.

What a grand sentence! There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. It is enough to cause any Christian to rejoice in his soul. There is a painting entitled: "Waiting For The Verdict." It is a courtroom scene. Every face in the picture reveals an intense interest, as the verdict is awaited. There is fear that is approaching anguish written upon the face of the prisoner at the bar. There is a terrible suspense and an awful anxiety on the part of his wife, relatives, and friends around him. It is a sad picture indeed.

Another picture might be painted and entitled: "The Favorable Verdict Received." It would reveal that the prisoner is acquitted. Joy fills the courtroom. The accused, but now justified, man is receiving hearty congratulations from all sides. From the rôle of a prisoner, he walks out to enjoy the freedom of no condemnation. That would be a happy scene indeed.

Condemnation is a sad word. Some have been condemned by a human law, and are now paying the penalty for their crimes. As you have traveled across the country, you have observed men in stripes working by the side of the road. 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? Those men have been condemned by a human law, and they are serving sentence for their crime.

In various penitentiaries is a small room with only one queer-looking chair in it. 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? The man has been condemned by a human law, and is paying the penalty for his crime.

There are many law-abiding citizens who are never condemned and punished by human society, but every man has sinned against the divine government.

I. A Fourfold Condemnation.

Into this matter of condemnation four considerations enter.

1. There is the fact of guilt incurred through wrongdoing; or, in other words, sins committed. We have done those things which we ought not to have done.
2. There is a lack of righteousness on our part because of good omitted. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done. Sins of omission incur guilt. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Some persons often say, when trying to justify themselves, "I haven't done anything very bad." The question is, have they always done that which is good? If not, there is sin and guilt involved.
3. There is an inward tendency toward evil. Paul referred to this in the words: "When I would do good, evil is present with me." This brings condemnation.
4. There is the consciousness of spiritual powerlessness to overcome the adverse conditions, within and without, which sometimes lead to doubt and to despair.

Stated more concisely, and in order to bring the truth into greater relief, we may say that there is condemnation because of guilt incurred through wrong things actually done. There is condemnation because of the lack of righteousness through good things left undone. There is condemnation due to the evil nature within; and there is condemnation through spiritual powerlessness and defeat.

These four factors are common to humanity. They are revealed in the Bible and recognized in human life everywhere. They must be dealt with before the righteous "Judge of all the earth" can look upon the human soul and say: "No condemnation."

This is a bold statement: "There is therefore now no condemnation." There is no hesitancy, no beating about the bush, no "hope so" in the statement. Paul speaks with absolute certainty. If 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 body.

This is also a broad assertion. "There is therefore now no condemnation." Later, in this same chapter, Paul 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." 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 cannot be any just punishment.

II. A Fourfold Provision.

Who can deal with the things involved in the fourfold condemnation? Who is sufficient for these things? Is there among men anywhere one who is wise enough, good enough, or powerful enough to handle the situation? Is there any scholar, statesman, philosopher, psychologist, or human being who can deal adequately with these four matters that produce condemnation? Alas, not one! The best that any mere man can do is to take his place with the old patriarch and say, "How can I be justified before God?" How can he have a favorable verdict from his righteous Judge? The prison door is shut, and we are inside. Where is the key that will open this door? Thanks be to God, it is close at hand! It is found in the remaining words of our text: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." In Him a fourfold provision is made which answers back completely and satisfactorily to the four factors that produce condemnation.

1. There is condemnation upon us because of guilt, but in Christ Jesus guilt is removed.
2. There is condemnation because of the lack of a positive righteousness, but in Christ Jesus righteousness is imputed.
3. There is condemnation because of an evil nature within, but in Christ Jesus a new nature is imparted.
4. There is condemnation because of spiritual powerlessness and defeat, but in Christ Jesus spiritual power is provided, and we become "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

It is a blessed key which opens wide the prison-house of guilt and admits us into the realm of redemptive grace where there is "no condemnation." Such a provision is sufficient to set the joy-bells ringing in the soul and to compel one to say: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Let us consider carefully and appreciatively this fourfold provision.

1. Guilt is removed.

The sense of guilt incurred through wrongdoing is lifted from the conscience because, the penalty having been met, the sin is removed. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary's cross cleanses the conscience of the burden of guilt. At

the cross God called our sins into question. He pronounced upon them the sentence of death and then executed the sentence, for it is written: "Christ died for our sins." That death was a judgment death. "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." He assumed our liabilities, met all our delinquencies, discharged our obligations, removed our guilt; whereupon, the righteous Judge of all the earth can and does utter the verdict of our text: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

2. Righteousness is imputed.

The second contributing cause of our condemnation is the lack of righteousness through sins of omission. This is met by a righteousness which is reckoned to the account of the sinner who puts faith in the atoning blood of the Saviour, for it is written: "Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him." The truth of imputed righteousness is as clear in the Scriptures as is the truth of the removal of guilt.

3. New life is imparted.

Not only is guilt removed and righteousness imputed to the believer in Christ, thereby clearing him from condemnation, but a new life is also imparted. Our Lord is the fountain of a new life. To receive Him is to become a partaker of the divine nature. This divine and new life imparted to us does not displace the old fallen nature. The two dwell together in the same house, but they do not agree the one with the other. Rather, they lust against each other. Hence there is the conflict with which every true believer is painfully familiar.

4. Power is provided.

That which our Lord died and rose again to secure, the Holy Spirit leads the believer into and makes real in his experience. He liberates the soul from the dominion of sin through the knowledge of the truth and through yieldedness to it. By His gracious provision we may walk in newness of life and serve in newness of spirit. "It is God that worketh in you." The word "worketh" carries with it the idea of energy and effectiveness. It speaks of ultimate triumph. Patiently, faithfully, and constantly the Holy Spirit corrects, comforts, quickens, and strengthens in order that the purpose of God the Father might be carried out in our Christian experience.

Here is grace abounding -- guilt is removed; righteousness is imputed; life is imparted; and power is provided. Where, then, is there any room for condemnation? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

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 while the white, heated metal was poured over it. Turning to the man, the worker said, "You believed; your wife trusted."

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

"E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

"Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave."

-- William Cowper.