

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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February 8, 2026

Sermon Title: No Condemnation

Sermon Text: Romans 8:1

Rom. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Main Point: Because Jesus has borne the condemnation we deserve, everyone who is in Christ is truly and forever free from God's condemning verdict, so we can live without fear about our past, our present, or our future.

Outline:

1. The Condemnation We Deserve
2. The Grace that We Receive
3. The Life We Live Without Fear
 - a. Our Past is Past
 - b. Our Present is Peace
 - c. Our Future is Secure

Introduction

I feel sure that we all know the lingering, heavy feeling of guilt. But I feel safe saying that very few of us know the sheer terror of true, final condemnation. To understand the magnitude of Romans 8, we have to imagine a scene from actual history:

Picture the morning of December 22, 1849, in St. Petersburg, Russia. The famous author Fyodor Dostoevsky was marched into Semyonov Square with his co-

conspirators. They were dressed in burial shrouds and tied to wooden stakes. The firing squad formed a line and raised their rifles. Dostoevsky stared down the barrels, knowing he was seconds away from eternity. The order was given to load. He was a dead man walking.

But at the absolute last second, a messenger from the Tsar rode into the square waving a white flag. The execution was stayed. The rifles were lowered. In a split second, the verdict was reversed. Dostoevsky went from a condemned criminal to a living man.

That moment—that shock of life rushing back in where death was certain—is exactly where Paul is standing today. He has just spent Chapter 7 describing the wretched burden of sin that he still carries with him. He has been standing before the judge, waiting for the end. But then, the messenger arrives. The verdict is read, but it isn't death. Instead it says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus".

And that might sound like the sort of thing that a "convert," a new Christian needs to hear. But Paul seems to say, "No. There's something for me here even right now."

You see, if the Christian loves God, but never seems to live up to what he wants and loves, then what are we supposed to do? How can we live with ourselves? How can we live before God's face? And Paul's resounding answer is, "the gospel." The gospel isn't just there for the beginning of the Christian life. It's there for all of the Christian life. All our lives, we live under the banner of today's verse: "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." This is not just something for day one of the Christian life. Paul is saying, it's for *all* of the Christian life.

So today let's begin with the condemnation we deserve. But then let's consider the grace we receive. And then finally, the life we live without fear because of this good news!

1. The Condemnation We Deserve

First, we have to begin with the condemnation we deserve.

Paul is coming to terms with two things here: the condemnation that we have coming to us, and the rescue that God gives us from that condemnation. We want to move to “no condemnation” pretty quickly. And who can blame us? In Christ, there is no condemnation.

But please wait! All of this means that if someone is not in Christ, then there *is* condemnation. Let’s think about this first before we move to the good news.

I realize much of Romans so far has been spent with Paul reminding us that there is no one good, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God... but here Paul speaks in these legal terms of the condemnation that we deserve. Let’s think about how the Bible speaks of the condemnation that we deserve.

First, I’d like you to notice that the Bible speaks of our condemnation as a legal verdict by God. Listen to Nahum 1:2: “[the Lord is] a jealous and avenging God, who will by no means clear the guilty.” So when we think of condemnation, we need to think of it in terms of the covenant of works. Again, what is that covenant? It tells us, “do this and live,” and it also tells us, “sin and die.” God, as a good judge, looks upon sinners and gives them what they deserve. That’s what we’re talking about when we talk about condemnation. We’re talking about the right response that God should have when we sin, because he is holy and we are not.

But the Bible uses different images to describe this condemnation. For example, it speaks of condemnation in terms of curse and wrath. In Deuteronomy 27 and 28 God says explicitly, “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.”

The Bible also uses the imagery of death to describe our condemnation for sin. In Genesis, death is what God promised if we sinned. Ephesians 2:1 says, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” Romans 6:3 says, “the wages of sin is death.” James tells us that when sin is fully grown it “brings forth death.” And of course that death is what it looks like for us to experience condemnation. Paul says in 8:1 that apart from Christ, death really is coming for us.

We also see condemnation being pictured in Scripture as bondage, corruption, and dishonor. This bondage and slavery language is everywhere, but just consider John

8:34: “Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.” Sin and condemnation is slavery. In Romans 6 we’re told that people are “slaves of sin.”

The Bible also uses exile and banishment language. Because of our sin, condemnation looks like us being driven out of God’s presence. In Genesis 3 after the fall, mankind is barred from the garden and barred from the tree of life. In the Garden we were driven from the place of God’s presence and blessing. In 2 Thessalonians 1:9 we’re told that those who don’t believe the gospel will be sent “away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” In the Lord’s presence is life. And to be *away* from his presence is death. This is because God cannot coexist with his enemies.

What I want us all to come to terms with is not, “Well I guess we have to believe this.” I don’t want us to just sort of grudgingly admit, “Okay, I guess this is true.” I do want you to believe it’s true, but I want you to believe that it’s true and even to rejoice in this, not because it is pleasant to be condemned, but because the universe is centered around God, and not around our preferences. God is at the center. And because of that, we have to see sin for what it is: cosmic rebellion.

That is why our sin deserves to be condemned by God: because sin insults the majesty of the God of the universe who is powerful and glorious and holy. Because when we prefer sin, we are betraying God and committing cosmic treason. Until we see our sin for what it is, we will struggle to explain to ourselves and to other people why sin is so horrible, why God is so dishonored by it, and why our sin demands something as drastic and nightmarish as the pains of hell and condemnation Paul is talking about.

All have sinned. We all deserve this. And until we see it, believe it, and admit it, nothing about this verse will amaze us: “No condemnation.” If we don’t get it, then this promise won’t seem like good news at all. We will never understand the good news until we see and believe the bad news and take it seriously.

2. The Grace that We Receive

Second, we see something really joyful here in light of the condemnation we deserve, and that is The Grace that We Receive.

Grace is “God’s unmerited favor.” It is his benevolent attitude toward creatures who don’t deserve his kindness. It’s getting better than we deserve. But if we just talk about what it is as a definition, we miss the joy of Paul here in chapter 8. Because here he comes in and says, “Yes, by nature we do deserve condemnation, and that’s the moment when God instead says, ‘no.’ No condemnation.”

It's one thing to talk about grace, or to define it. But it's another to experience it. To really deserve and know that you deserve to be condemned, and to have that reversed... Paul was someone who, even as he talks about grace is talking about the thing that saved him from being someone who persecuted God’s people to becoming someone who set aside his own self-righteousness and filthy rags to now live every day in the grace of Christ.

One of the best known stories of someone experiencing God’s grace is John Newton, the hymn writer who gave us “Amazing Grace.” Long before he was the author of “Amazing Grace/how sweet the sound,” he was a foul-mouthed, hard-hearted sailor who eventually became captain of a slave ship, profiting directly from the kidnapping and brutal transport of enslaved Africans. In the midst of this, the Lord pursued him: during a fierce storm at sea in 1748, when the ship seemed sure to sink, Newton cried out to God for mercy and over time came to a living faith in Christ. Though he continued for a season in the slave trade, he increasingly came under conviction of sin, left the trade, and later became an Anglican minister and a powerful preacher of the gospel of grace.

Looking back with deep shame on his past, he bore witness that his forgiveness rested not on any reform in himself but solely on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. Out of this experience came his most famous hymn, “Amazing Grace,” in which the former blasphemer and slave trader could truthfully sing, “that saved a wretch like me,” as a trophy of God’s undeserved mercy.

What makes Newton’s story so powerful begins with the fact that he could say “I was a wretch.” John Newton was ready to receive and believe the gospel. But only once he saw what a nightmare his own heart had become.

Like I say, it’s one thing to define and talk about grace. It’s another to be amazed by it and rejoice in it. This is real. People really experience this gospel freedom and

amazement. Every day God is awakening peoples' heart to receive God's amazing grace.

And here's what makes it grace: you don't deserve it. If you deserved it, we wouldn't call it grace. Some people resist God's grace because they don't believe they are bad. But many resist God's grace because they think they need to be good. They convince themselves that they'll never deserve this, and they have to before they can come.

But that's like saying, "I'll never get to my destination because there isn't enough sugar in my gas tank." This car runs on gasoline, not sugar. And mixing even a little sugar in will ruin it, and leave the car broken down by the road.

So many Christians are broken down because they keep trying to make the car run on sugar. They say, "I'll be better. I'll do more. I'll clean up my life first." But all of Romans has been Paul showing us just what we get when we try to live that way. What does it get us? Well Paul has said, "By the works of the law no one shall be justified." You can't get to the end of an infinite treadmill.

Well God's grace doesn't run on some kind of merit or works or ceremonies or magic phrases. God's grace runs on his sheer kindness. Totally undeserved. That's what's amazing about grace. And Christ has come into the world to make that grace a reality, not just a possibility.

Okay, if God's grace isn't about what we deserve, then how can we get it? This is our instinct: that people should only get what they deserve. If you want something, you have to earn it. If you get something you have to work for it. But Paul's whole point in Romans is that we can't do enough, deserve enough, or serve enough. After Adam's fall, works become a treadmill that never get us to peace.

So who receives this grace? It's here in this verse. According to Paul, the ones who receive no condemnation are "those who are in Christ Jesus." So it is being "in Christ" that is life-giving for sinners. Why? Well it's all over Romans, but the Scripture tells us that it is "in Christ" that we receive all his benefits. In Christ, there is forgiveness. In Christ, there is justification. In Christ our condemnation is lifted.

Because that is who Christ is: HE is righteous. HE is holy. In him, sin was condemned on the cross. In him, we have resurrection because he himself was raised.

Everything that we need, everything that we yearn for is found in this person: the perfect Savior who is both God and man.

How can we be “in Christ”? Through faith.

Jesus says, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me...does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24). Receiving this gospel doesn’t require us to contort ourselves or sacrifice ourselves, or do some great deed. But the world doesn’t understand this. But that’s why we preach. To help the world to hear this good news. I feel no greater burden than to make you see the beauty of the gospel in Christ so that you can know and experience this good news for yourself. It is why I do what I do.

“He was pierced for our transgressions...upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace” (Is. 53:5-6). “The LORD has taken away the judgment against you...you shall never again fear evil” (Zeph. 3:15).

Zephaniah is saying, in God’s grace, due to no merit or good deeds or works of our own, God gives us peace, *God* lifts the judgment we deserved, and *God* takes away our fear. “You shall never again fear evil.” What an amazing promise. And this is where we’re going with this as we conclude.

3. The Life We Live Without Fear

And so third and finally today, Paul presents us with a glimpse of the life we live without fear.

In Christ, our past is past. Our present is peace. And our future is secure. Because of this, God really has taken every reason we have to be afraid or anxious. I want us to look at all of these.

The first reason we live life without fear is because in Christ Our Past is Past. This is what it means that Paul says, “there is no condemnation.” Even someone like Paul is able to have peace. And he persecuted God’s church! And he makes very clear

that his past is past. It's still real, and he occasionally will tell people what he had done. But he does it to celebrate God's grace. But Paul's past is transformed into something that he's not constantly looking over his shoulder in fear. What is in your past that is still imprisoning you... that you're afraid is still condemning you?

Whatever your source of shame is, in Christ he takes it. Christ was shamed on the cross, stripped naked. He became sin and was treated like a criminal. No greater shame, and he bore it! Christ experienced it all. So if you are a Christian, why are you still living as if he didn't do that? Do you think deep down that you owe it to him that you should suffer just a bit more? You can not be a greater savior for yourself than Jesus is. Let him take your shame. Psalm 34 says, "Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall *never be ashamed*."

And if you're not yet a Christian, I want you to know: there is no sin too great, no stain too dark that Christ cannot and will not wash it clean, and take it from you forever.

What is in your past that God is telling you to surrender to Christ? What is in your past that you need to understand has been put away in the gospel? Hear those words: "no condemnation." I know it seems too good to be true. But it's not. "No condemnation." In the gospel, Christ looks you full in the face, knows you completely and says, "go in peace. No condemnation." In Christ, our past is past.

We can live without fear also because our Present is Peace. Right *now*, in Christ, we enjoy this grace. Grace is not obsessed with the past. And it also isn't just a someday thing. It's a right now thing. Because right now, we know what it means not to be condemned. Right *now*, we enjoy Christ. And our present experience sort of brings together the remembrance of what is past. Living without fear is a right now reality.

I mentioned John Newton, the former slaver. Listen to how Newton says this:

"I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be; but I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great Apostle, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'"

Who are we right now in Christ? We are not condemned, right now. We are a new creation, right now. We are justified and at peace with God, right now. We are adopted as his children, right now. We are indwelt by and sealed by the Holy Spirit, right now. We still have sin's presence, but it no longer has dominion over us, right now. In Christ, all things work together for our good, right now.

But there's one more reason we can live without fear: in Christ Our Future is Secure.

In Christ, eternal life is ours now, but that life stretches on into the future. So Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice... I give them *eternal life*, and they will *never perish*, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-29).

In Christ, we not only enjoy this secure and eternal life, but it can't be taken away. It's not like the nice thing that we have that we're constantly wondering how long we might have it.

Are you the sort of person who is always waiting for the other shoe to drop? Every time you have a wonderful thing you think, "How long until I lose this? How long until it's all gone?" Well the gospel is the good thing that we never have to think, "When do I lose this, too?" Romans 8:38: "Nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In Christ, we have an imperishable inheritance that will never go away. In Christ, we look forward to a future resurrection and glorification. "Because I live," Jesus says, "you also will live" (John 14:19). "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11).

And there's something even greater ahead for us than this. Remember what we've said before: the gospel is about reuniting us with God. It's about how God brings us home, back to him. The prodigal comes home not just to eat good again and have a roof over his head, but to look his father in the face and be restored to him.

The hope of beholding God is what theologians call it the beatific vision. And it's the moment when we will be changed. And the Bible speaks of this beatific vision in a few ways.

Jesus prays that the father would ensure that his people “may be with me where I am, and see my glory” (John 17:24). To see God... to see the glory of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians Paul reflects how “now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Or think of the hope of the Psalmist in Psalm 27: “One thing I have asked of the Lord...to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple” (27:4). He wants to gaze upon the Lord’s beauty. That’s the hope.

And what an incredible hope. That’s a hope bigger than heaven. Bigger than ourselves. It’s a hope that swallows everything else up. That’s an incredible future, not just a tolerable one.

Jonathan Edwards puts it a bit academic, but he still says it well: “The redeemed will indeed enjoy God, and they will see Him as He is. This seeing will be the most perfect and exalted way of enjoying God.” We will exalt God by beholding him and enjoying him.

And what I want you to know, Christian, is that even if the sufferings of this present life are incredible, once that suffering is gone, it won’t even be worth looking back. Our joy then will be so full and complete, we’ll never find ourselves wondering, “What is missing?” We’ll never have to wonder, “Will I lose this?” We will be so taken up with and consumed with God himself, that we will never feel empty, or sad, or bored or dissatisfied ever again.

So put this all together: if we have no reason to fear the past, we have no reason to fear the present, and we have no reason to fear the future, what does that tell us? It tells us that in the Gospel God is in the business of taking away every source of fear. Every reason we might possibly have to be fearful about what we’ve done, what we’re doing, or what we *might* will do. And he’s actually done it. He isn’t just trying to get us to think positively. He’s telling us what he’s done. He’s telling us the monumental achievement of the gospel, which he won for us when he said those words, “It is finished.”

The question we all must live with is: will we believe it? For it is in believing that we are united with Christ, and receive everything that this gospel promises.

Let's pray.