

Series: In Christ

April 27-28, 2019

Title: No Condemnation

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Text: Romans 8:1-4

Not Guilty! (vv. 1-2)

The verdict is in:

We're all familiar with those sensational trials that capture the attention of the entire nation. When the case at last goes to the jury, the major news networks set up a 24/7 operation outside the courthouse. Reporters wait breathlessly for any hint that the jury has reached a decision.

Then comes the announcement: the jury has finished its work and is ready to deliver its verdict. The courtroom fills for the last time, the jury files into the jury box, the clerk asks the foreperson if they have agreed on a verdict. Everyone holds their breath. What will it be? Guilty or Not Guilty?

Reporters listen with one eye on the back door of the courtroom, eager to be the first to emerge with the verdict. The accused sits, hardly daring to look at the jury. The next words out of the foreperson's mouth will determine the course of the rest of his life.

"Not Guilty!"

This is the scene that Paul evokes when he announces:

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Romans 8:1 NIV

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

The greatest trial of all – the one that brings each and every one of us to the Court of Heaven itself – is over. The God of Heaven and Earth, Who presides as both Judge and Jury, has delivered the verdict. And the verdict is: Not Guilty! No condemnation!

But wait? When is this trial supposed to happen? Isn't it going to take place at the end of time? Isn't that why it's called the Final Judgment? So how can

there be a verdict right now? The trial hasn't even begun. The evidence hasn't even been collected.

And yet, Paul says boldly, "*Therefore, there is **now** no condemnation...*" No, this isn't a mistake. The Judge has indeed issued His ruling. It has already been announced in Heaven, and Paul is announcing it to Earth on God's behalf: Not guilty!

No need to wait in fear for the End of Time. No more doubt or confusion as to just how much our Heavenly Father loves us! Unbeknownst to us, the trial was concluded before we were even born. Not guilty!

In Christ

"...for those who are in Christ Jesus"

How could this be? How could the great Judge of the Universe declare us "Not Guilty" despite all the evidence to the contrary?

The answer lies in the final words of Romans 8:1:

*...for those who are **in** Christ Jesus...*

In ancient times, the fate of the king was the fate of the people. At times, the king would engage in one-on-one combat with the king or champion of an opposing army. If he won the contest, then his army, and his kingdom, won. If he lost, then they lost as well. Just think of the story of David and Goliath: Goliath challenged Israel to send up a champion to take him on, winner take all. David took the challenge; his victory over the giant meant that Israel won the battle. To put it in Paul's terms, Israel was "in David." David's victory was Israel's victory.

Paul says that Jesus did the same thing for you and me when He fought the giants of Sin and Death and defeated them on the Cross. His resurrection demonstrated that the victory had been truly won. Instead of being a false messiah, guilty of death, He was declared Not Guilty.

And when we are "in Messiah Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One, we are Not Guilty as well!

A Just Verdict:

Verdicts are based on laws. The law condemns us or exonerates us. And the same is true in God's courtroom. To help us understand how we can be declared Not Guilty when we are "in Christ Jesus," Paul explains:

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Romans 8:2 NIV

...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

It sounds like Paul is talking about two opposing laws or principles: The "law of the Spirit who gives life," and the "law of sin and death." But actually, Paul is talking about the *same God-given Law* from two aspects.

The Law – as "the law of sin and death" – exposes our guilt and brokenness.

The Law – as "the law of the Spirit who gives life" – fulfills its mission as God's gift of Life to us.

You see, God's Law, or Torah, was more than a list of rules. It was the revelation of His purpose for us as people created in His image. Its ultimate goal was that we would live in such a way that He could dwell with us – with ourselves as His Temple. It was always meant to be the source of God's Life in our world.

Moses put it this way when speaking of God's Law – the Torah:

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Deuteronomy 32:47 NIV

*"They are not just idle words for you—they are your **life**. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."*

And isn't that what all good laws are meant to do. They aren't written to make people fail; they are designed to bring life and order. It is only when we violate the law that it brings judgment and condemnation against us. Then, it becomes the "law of sin and death."

The gift of God's Son:

But of course the fact that God's Law *was meant to bring life* doesn't help us if we cannot live to its standard! That is why God sent His Son Jesus.

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Romans 8:3-4 NIV

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world on our behalf as the ultimate gift of love. Jesus was the living embodiment of "the law of the Spirit of life." He never sinned against the Father. Sin and Death had no hold on Him.

Out of sheer love, Jesus chose to take *our* sin upon Himself. He came *as one of us*: "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He knew what it was like to be tempted, but never gave into the temptation. And when He went to the Cross, He willingly took our guilt, our shame, and our sin upon Himself so *that it would once and for all die on the cross with Him.*

Our debt was paid. Our sentence was served. And our sin is no more.

No Condemnation

Not Guilty:

Because Jesus died for you and me, the right demands of God's good Law have all been satisfied. When God looks at you, He sees Jesus; you are "in Christ Jesus." And when He sees you, He gladly says, Not Guilty!

Now, the verdict of Heaven is that we are right in God's eyes. Innocent of all charges. Paul puts it this way:

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Romans 8:4

...in order that the righteous verdict of the law might be fulfilled in us...

Paul began this passage by announcing that “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Now he concludes the paragraph by saying that “the righteous verdict of the law” is fulfilled in us. Case closed!

Spirit Life:

Remember the two aspects of God’s Law? On the one hand, it exposes our sin and failures – what Paul refers to as our “flesh.” On the other hand, through Jesus’ victory over Sin and Death, it becomes God’s gift of Life.

Paul says that when we’re “in Christ,” we are not only declared innocent of all charges, but we are launched into a brand new way of living:

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Romans 8:4b NIV

...who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

We’re not only set free by Jesus’ death on the cross. We’re raised to new life with Him in His resurrection. Paul spells it clearly when he writes:

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Romans 6:1-4 NIV

6 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

God didn’t just wipe our slate clean despite our sins and failures. No, He fully *rehabilitated us* so that we can live lives free from the sin that once ruled in our lives.

We’re not the same person we were before we gave our lives to Jesus and accepted His Story as our story. We’re no longer slaves to Sin and Death. God’s Holy Spirit has come into our lives to set us free and to empower us to

become the place where God chooses to dwell. That's what it means to live "according to the Spirit."

No condemnation:

Which side of God's Law are you living under today? Is it the side of His Law that points out your sin and failures? If so, He invites you to give your life to Him by accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Only you can choose to make Jesus' story *your story*. Only you can accept God's gift of forgiveness. No one can do it for you.

And when you do, God's own Spirit will come to live in you, bringing with Him the Good News: Not Guilty!