

No Condemnation, No Separation

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let's turn together back to Romans chapter 8.

And we are going to continue our study on Romans today. And we've come to the last two verses of chapter 8, which in many ways is the end of a big section.

If you read on into chapter 9, you see that Paul's focus moves on and there's a change of subject. But we are still in chapter 8, and we're going to focus on the very last two verses of this chapter.

And I'll read again from verse 35, and then we can just pick up on to that as it comes. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written, for your sake, we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

[1 : 0 1] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We've spent the last few weeks in this great chapter of Romans 8. And as I've said many times, it's a chapter that we want to all make sure that we know well. It's a chapter that we always want to go back to.

It's one that we want to always have in our back pocket for guidance, for encouragement, for teaching, and for a reminder of all the blessings that we have in Jesus Christ.

And that's really the great theme of this chapter. We've been saying in our study that Romans is all about the Gospel. It's about the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul is explaining in detail to us how that Gospel works.

And he comes to, in many ways, what's a climax in Romans 8, where he summarises many of the astonishing blessings that are ours through union with Christ.

[2 : 1 0] That's what happens to you when you become a Christian. You are united to Jesus Christ and through that union there are many, many blessings.

And to begin with today, I want us just to summarise some of the main things that this chapter has shown to us. And as we do that, it's reminding us that this is the difference that being a Christian will make to your life.

Often we can be held back by that question. What will happen to me if I become a Christian? How is it going to change my life? What difference is it going to make?

And we can easily think that it's going to make our lives worse. And I think many people have lots of misconceptions about Christianity in that sense.

We think that Christianity is going to restrict us, that Christianity is going to make our life more negative and that it's going to spoil it in some ways. It's very easy to think, being a Christian is going to make my life worse.

[3 : 10] And so people tend to put it off. But that's completely, completely false. Because the truth is, knowing and following Jesus is absolutely brilliant.

And supposing we were here all day and all night and all through the week, we would not even remotely scratch the surface in terms of the astounding blessings that belong to us through faith in Jesus.

And the reason that being a Christian is so brilliant is set before us in this chapter. And that's always good to remind ourselves. We're not just saying Christianity is brilliant.

We are saying it's brilliant because of certain reasons. We always want to be logical and coherent in terms of what we are saying. And so Paul gives us many, many reasons why it is so, so good to know Jesus Christ.

And I'm going to summarise 10 that we've got taken out of this chapter. They'll all be very brief and we'll just go through them quickly. But we can pick out these 10 things. There's more, but 10 is a good round number, I think, to use.

[4 : 22] So first of all, Paul tells us in Christ, there is now no condemnation. That's what he says at the very beginning of the chapter. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that's an absolutely astonishing statement. If you think back to what Paul has said earlier in the letter, because in the second half of chapter one, chapter two, and the first half of chapter three, Paul is telling us what a massive, massive problem sin is.

And in many ways, when you read that section at the start, it seems like for people, condemnation is inescapable, because the problem of sin is so great.

And we can still see that in the world around us. Sin has wrecked so many people's lives and sin has wrecked our relationship with God. And it seems that everything is just totally broken because of sin and condemnation seems just inescapable.

And yet now we come to chapter eight and Paul says, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[5 : 31] So you think of every reason that God could find to condemn you. You remember that God is absolutely righteous, absolutely perfect, and anything that's not of that standard is incompatible with God.

And you look at yourself and you think, well, how many reasons could God find to say, well, you're not good enough? You can find so many failures, so many mistakes, so many regrets, so many silly things that we've done that give him every justification in condemning us.

And yet now Paul says, there is no condemnation for you if you trust in Jesus. Number two, Paul says, in Christ, you now have freedom from sin.

The law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. Paul, when he talks about sin, often uses the language of slavery, because that's really what sin is, is like a horrible, cruel slave master that is trying to destroy you, trying to restrict you, and trying to keep you bound under its power.

So sin is constantly, constantly trying to get us to do things that sin wants us to do, constantly trying to restrict us, constantly trying to hurt us.

[6 : 49] It's a brutal, cruel, horrible slave master. And sometimes we feel so, so trapped and so bound and so weak in the face of that.

And yet Paul tells us that now in Christ, you are free, absolutely free from sin.

And so sin has no power over you, no power over you whatsoever. Often we feel like it does, often we feel like sin is slow master, but Paul makes it absolutely clear, sin shall have no dominion over you, sin is not your master anymore.

And that's one of the many reasons why we have a brilliant opportunity now to live a far, far, far better way, because we have freedom from sin through faith in Jesus Christ.

Number three, Paul tells us that in Christ you have new life. So if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deed to the body, you will live.

[7 : 58] And so God is telling us to turn around, that's what repentance means. So instead of going down an old path that was ultimately leading to a horrible destination, he's saying turn around and live a new life, live a new way.

And that's why the key to authentic, meaningful, satisfying, fulfilling and joyful life is to follow Jesus Christ.

People often talk about quality of life. And so we think in various ways about people's quality of life, about the status that they have, maybe their wealth, maybe the conditions that they live in, maybe the social interaction that they have, maybe the opportunities that they get.

And for some people, quality of life is better, for others it's lower, and it's really, really important to do what we can to help those for whom quality of life is not good.

But ultimate, true quality of life is found in one place. It is found in knowing Jesus Christ.

[9 : 03] And that's why you can see people who are incredibly well off, or you can see people who have absolutely nothing. And they are full of joy because they know Jesus.

And so through faith in Christ, we have new life and a whole new quality of life. And when we have that, the things that used to bother us don't really matter so much anymore.

So we have new life. Number four, even a new family. Paul speaks about that in verse 14, this chapter teaching us about the great doctrine of adoption.

He says, And in many, many ways, this is I think the pinnacle of what God has for us in Jesus Christ.

Our status is transformed from being condemned sinners to being adopted children of God. And you just think about how precious you are to God as his child.

[10 : 21] We have this amazing privilege that God is our Father. We have the perfect Father in him, and he is protecting you, loving you, caring for you, and is absolutely devoted to you.

But not only that, you also have millions and millions and millions of brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, because the family of God is one united family.

And as any family, we share so much joy and happiness and fun and love together as a family. So in Christ, you are part of a new family.

Number five in Christ, you have new status. So if we think maybe a wee bit more objectively in terms of your status, it says, The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And then there's a consequence of that, which Paul writes in verse 17. He says, He says, If children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

[11 : 29] So our status has been transformed from condemned sinners to being adopted children of God, who are now heirs of God.

Now that simply means, as we said a few weeks ago, that the best that God has to give is coming to you. So when you think of an inheritance, you don't pass on your worst stuff, you pass on your best.

And so the best that God has is promised to you as an inheritance that we share with none other than Jesus Christ himself.

And of course, that's something that God does status is something that God bestows inheritance is something that God decides. And so he has said, You are my heirs.

We have this amazing new status. Number six in Christ, you have a new future. And that's something that Paul highlights very clearly in this chapter, he really gets us to think ahead in Romans chapter eight.

[12 : 33] And that's one of the great things that he does for us in this chapter. He says, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

So whenever you suffer now, whenever you face disappointment, whenever you face hardship, whenever you feel sad, whenever you face difficulty, Paul is saying, compare that to your future.

Compare that to what lies ahead for you in Jesus Christ. And you will discover that there is absolutely no comparison whatsoever. Because everything that we have now, no matter how difficult it may seem, it's tiny compared to the astonishing blessings that God has waiting for us.

We've highlighted the fact that that reminds us of what we call the already not yet balance that we have in our salvation. Already we have many blessings, but the best is yet to come.

There's a not yet and God has many, many wonderful things waiting for us. Related to that is number seven, where in Christ you now have a new hope.

[13 : 42] He says, not only the creation, but we ourselves, you have the first fruits of the spirit, grown inwardly as we eagerly await for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Hope is such a precious, wonderful thing.

And in Christ Jesus we have a hope that will never ever fail. So whatever struggles, whatever challenges, whatever failings, whatever trials we face, whatever happens in Jesus, we now have hope.

Number eight, you have a new helper. Paul talks about this. Likewise, the spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we don't know what to pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. So the Holy Spirit himself dwells in you and he intercedes for you.

[14 : 47] That means he speaks on your behalf. And so you think of all the times that you don't know what to think, all the times you don't know what to say, all the times you don't know what to do in all these situations.

God, the Holy Spirit himself, is right on hand to help you. Number nine, in Christ we have new purpose. Paul says in verse 28, we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

For those who are called according to his purpose. We've been called by God according to his purpose, according to what he wants. And that takes away all the frustration and futility and emptiness that we face in life.

There are so, so many people in the world looking to find meaning, looking to find purpose. And yet the only place where we really find that is in Jesus Christ himself.

There we find our true purpose. There we find our true meaning. There everything fits together perfectly in him. And so God's called us to a new way, to a better way.

[15 : 52] And he's given us purpose in our lives. And we live out our lives serving that purpose. So next week, next month, next year, whatever you are doing for the Lord is incredibly exciting.

And the future for Carlowe is incredibly exciting because we are working according to God's purpose. And we're here to do what he wants for us. So we have new purpose through faith in Jesus Christ.

And then in number 10, you have a new defender because God is very protective. And so although we face all sorts of opposition and challenges and difficulties, Paul says in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

God is immensely protective of you. He cares for you and wants to protect you and wants to keep you. That's the why he points you away from things that are going to harm you.

So when the world is tempting us with something that looks very enticing, but is ultimately going to damage us, God says, keep away from that. Avoid it. And that, of course, means being different.

[16 : 56] Being a Christian means being different from the world. And sometimes the world can seem very, very much like it's against us. But in all these trials of life, God is reminding us that we are more than conquerors.

We will be completely and overwhelmingly victorious. No enemy, no opposition can stand against us. So if you are a Christian, or if you become one, which you can today, then you are united to Jesus Christ.

And through that union, you have all of these amazing blessings. No condemnation, new freedom, new life, new family, new status, new future, new hope, new health, but new purpose, new defender.

And all of these things are proving the fact that you have a God who loves you with an utterly extraordinary love. And one of the great things that Romans 8 tells us is that God does not hold back in terms of how much he loves you.

God does not hold back in terms of how much he wants to bless you. God does not hold back in terms of all the things that he wants to give you. And that's the only scratch in the surface.

[18 : 12] The rest of Romans, the rest of the Bible fills us with many, many, many more of these astonishing blessings that God gives us through faith in Jesus Christ.

We have all of these amazing blessings. But there's one more thing that Paul wants to tell us. And it's connected to all of these things.

And it's something that we must make sure that we write on our hearts. Paul has listed all of these blessings in Romans 8. He says, you've got, there's no condemnation for you.

You've got new freedom, new life, new family, new status, new future, new hope, new helper, new purpose, new defender. And then he adds one final crucial point.

He tells us that absolutely nothing can ever take these things away from you. But I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from you.

[19 : 27] And separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Now Paul is getting us to think big in these verses.

Because like he has done several times in this book, he's getting us to think about creation. He did that right at the very start in chapter one. And it's a theme that he picks up again and again and again.

And we've summarized that with a diagram that we've shown several times, what we call the Creator-Creation distinction. That's what lies at the heart of a biblical worldview, the fact that God is Creator and the fact that everything else that exists is His creation.

So when you look at that we circle, you see that the whole of the universe, the whole of history, the whole of matter is in that circle. God is Creator, we and everything else are His creation.

Paul always wants us to think in that way. I want you to always think in that way, that to be your worldview, God is the distinct Creator and everything else is the work of His hand.

[20 : 31] So even though the universe is massive, really it's tiny. And even though history is incredibly long, really it's actually short. Because it is all simply in the palm of the hand of the Creator.

And the great point that Paul is making here is that when you look at that diagram, and when you look at creation and you think of all the stuff that is in that we circle, Paul is saying there is absolutely nothing in that creation that can separate you from the love of God. And he highlights several things just to reinforce that point.

And in doing so, he in many ways he gets us to think in terms of the great principles that operate within creation. So if you think big, if you think in terms of metaphysics, the whole of creation, the whole of reality, the whole of stuff that is there, that's what Paul wants us to think about in terms of this version.

He's highlighting one, two, three, four, five, I think five, maybe more five, five great principles that operate within creation. And as we identify these, the key point that I think that we need to remember is that all of these things are incredibly powerful.

So Paul talks about five things that are incredibly powerful within that created realm. And we can see them here in these versions. The first thing he talks about is mortality.

[22 : 05] You see the phrase there, he talks about death and life. And in many ways, life and death is certainly for us as humans, it's like the ultimate principle of existence.

Things that are life and death are really at the highest, biggest level. Because when we say it's not a matter of life and death, it's because if something is a matter of life and death, it's really, really, really important. So thinking about mortality, thinking about life or death, it's a massive principle in terms of the functioning of the world. And in many ways, for humans, these are the two most powerful principles because without life, we're nothing.

We don't exist without life. And now, even though we have life, we are ultimately powerless in the face of death. And so you think of, although yes, we have life and we completely depend on life, death is a force, a power that we can't stop, that we can't prevent. You think of life and death, you think that's incredibly powerful. It's a very, very powerful force. You look at the whole of nature, it functions on the basis of life and death and mortality. So that's the first thing that Paul highlights. Then he talks about authority. So he talks about angels and rulers. So whether it's heavenly beings or earthly rulers, there are many, many forces of authority in this creation that God has made. That's been through throughout history, the same as through today. So every single society in the world is dominated by some sort of ruler, isn't it? So you have a, sometimes you have an individual who rules over a particular territory. Sometimes you have a group of people, I suppose that's maybe what our country is like, an elected group. Sometimes it might be a family, a dynasty that has control, but everywhere, everywhere in the world, there is authority and we can't escape it.

You can't go somewhere in Britain where we're not under the authority of the government. We can't say that we're excluded and even though people try to resist it, that resistance will either lead to problems or it will just lead to a new form of authority where the people who don't like one authority replace it with another. Authority is very, very, very powerful. It's always there. You're always under it. It's inescapable. Authority is very, very powerful.

Then Paul talks about something even, maybe even bigger. He talks about time. So you look at the wee circle of the creation and within the whole of that creation, you have this thing called time, which really dominates everything, doesn't it? I face a battle against time every Sunday morning and I'm losing it again today, I think. But we're always fighting against time, aren't we?

[25 : 13] And we would love to stop time. We'd love to maybe change time. We would love to extend time, but we can't, you think of time, it's completely, totally unstoppable for us. Keeps on moving, does not wait, seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years, the aging process, the forward movement of history, it keeps on moving. Time is incredibly powerful. Then Paul talks about powers. So within that little circle, the created realm, you've got morality, life and death, you've got authority, you've got time, you've got powers as well. Now you could think that's a very broad term and there's probably lots of different things that we could highlight there. I just want to take it very simply. Think of power in terms of strength and energy.

So when I suppose maybe when I think of power, I tend to think of power stations and generating electricity or a dam holding back a massive body of water. You think of the waves pounding against the shore. All around us, the creation is full of extraordinary power, the wind, the sea, the sun, gravity, all of these things. There's immense capacity within the creation to exert force and for energy to be displayed in lots of different ways. If you look at nature, it's incredibly capable, it's incredibly powerful and humanity can harness that power a little bit, but ultimately it's in many ways far more powerful than we can imagine. And then fifthly, Paul talks about geography, we could say, because within that creation that we circle, there's geography, there's heights and there's depths. Now again, we could say that height and depth probably refers to more than just mountains and seas, but even at that level, even if you just think in terms of that level, you look at the world around you, you look at the heights, you look at the depths, you look at the shape of the world around you, you can see that we are really just tiny in comparison to that. So if you come to a hill, we can't say, oh, out of my way, or if you come to an ocean, you can't just say, oh, please just dry up for me. We have to submit to the heights in front of us, to the depths before us. These things have got more power than we have. And then again, we can maybe do a little to adjust that with tunnels or bridges or whatever, but again, it's just a drop in the ocean compared to the power that these things have all around us. So within that we circle, you've got mortality, you've got authority, you've got time, you've got power, you've got geography, and all of these things are strong. All of these things are incredibly powerful. So can we overcome the limitations of life and death? No, we can't. Can we dictate to the authorities of the world? No, we can't. Can we tell time what to do? No, we can't. Can we stop the power of nature around us? No, we can't. Can we move a mountain range or fill up an ocean?

Absolutely not a chance. We are powerless. We are tiny compared to all of these things. And that can leave us feeling very, very small and very, very vulnerable. We have to submit to the power of mortality, authority, time, power, geography. We have to submit to these things all the time. And so when you read these things, you think they're powerful. But the great thing that Paul is telling us is, do you know actually they are powerless in terms of separating you from the love of God in Jesus Christ? And that's highlighted by a really important phrase that Paul uses that is easy to miss. And I say it's easy to miss because I've never really noticed it myself or never really thought about it myself in the way that I should. Paul says, none of these things will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. And that phrase is really, really important because the phrase that's been used there will not be able basically means they do not have the power. They do not have the ability. They can't do it. So Paul is not just saying these things won't separate us from the love of God. He is saying these things cannot separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. They do not have the ability. They do not have the power.

They cannot do it. So Paul has given us this amazing list of the blessings that are out through our union with Christ by faith. And then he gets us to think about the whole of creation and especially in terms of the most powerful structure and forces that are operating within that creation. And then he says there is absolutely nothing in that creation with the ability to separate you from your father, from your savior and from your comforter. So whatever it is that whatever you think of that can threaten you, whatever makes you doubt, whatever makes you afraid, whatever it is Paul says that it does not have the ability. It does not have the power to separate you from Jesus. And then you'll notice that at the end he just adds in a brilliant phrase. He talks about these great forces and structures that exist within creation. He says they can't do it and neither can anything else. Nothing, absolutely nothing in that creation can separate you from Jesus Christ. The most powerful forces in all creation are actually powerless in terms of threatening your union with Christ. And that confirms to you just how brilliant it is to be a follower of Jesus. And in this chapter we go from no condemnation at the start to no separation at the end. We are totally eternally safe and secure if we trust in Jesus. But just as we finish I want us to notice one more we word and that's something I think I've often said. The big words are really important in the Bible but the we words are really really important as well. And there's a really really important word just at the very end of that and that's the word us. Paul doesn't say nothing will separate me from the love of God. He says nothing shall separate us. And it's a great reminder that the astonishing security that we have through our union with Christ is something that we share together. It's the Christian faith is not individualistic. It's collective. It's something that we share. And so that means that that that we have this amazing security together. And that's why as Christians not only can we hold on to Jesus we can also hold on to each other. Because we are one body, one team, one family and nothing in the universe has the power to break that. So you think about that. All those forces they've got no power to separate you from Jesus. They've got no power to separate you and me as brothers and sisters in Christ. We have this amazing security in Jesus. So if you are a Christian or if you become a

Christian then you have a massive list of blessings in your life. And then to top it all off God says nothing, absolutely nothing can ever take them away. So really if you are not yet a Christian then today is the day to just go for it. Because God is offering you all of this. And I really want you to forget whatever is holding you back. And I really want you to know that the the church here will look after you and all that lies ahead. Do not worry if you are weak or vulnerable because we are all like that. Just go for it. Because this is what God has for you. This is what God promises you and God himself will never ever ever let you down. Let's pray together.

[34 : 37] God our Father we thank you so much for all that your word teaches us. And we thank you for the amazing teaching that that is contained in Romans chapter 8. And then at the end we are given this amazing promise of no separation. And what an amazing comfort that is that the most powerful forces in creation are actually powerless in separating us from you. And we just can't thank you enough for doing far more abundantly than we could ask or think. We pray that every single one of us would just follow you and trust you and live for you. That we would forsake everything that is holding us back. And that we would lose any desire to carry on on a path that's sinful. And that's leading us away from you. And that we would just commit our lives to you today and forevermore.

Please lead us in your way that we would live for you while we have breath in our lungs. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.