

Message: No Condemnation
By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison
Romans 8:1-8
Romans 8 Sermon Series
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I had a professor who often said, “A text without a context is a pretext.” Failure to know what goes before and what comes after our current experience is often misleading. Context is everything.

Paul’s conclusion in chapter 7 is bleak: “*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (7:24) “*Wretched*” means “*worthless, despicable, inadequate, shameful, vile, miserable, inferior, and heartbroken.*” John Newton used this word to describe himself in the hymn, “Amazing Grace,” “*that saved a wretch like me.*” Paul sounds like he is tormented by condemnation. “*Sin, death, flesh, and hostile to God*” are not places we want to be. The law is good but is powerless to redeem. Paul suddenly made a profound shift in chapter 8. His “get out of jail free card” was based on the merits of Jesus Christ. No longer was he condemned. Continuing Newton’s song, “*I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.*” Paul had a comprehensive view when it comes to “*no condemnation.*”

Through God’s mercy, our poisoned cup of sin has been poured out and refilled with grace and the Holy Spirit. Paul has mentioned the Holy Spirit only four times in the first seven chapters of Romans. In chapter 8 he references the Holy Spirit 27 times. The Holy Spirit appears more times in this chapter than in any other chapter in the entire Bible.

APPLICATION: Our memory verse this week is Romans 8:1: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Spend your week releasing the toxin of condemnation and receiving the breath of the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 7 Paul described his spiritual dilemma. He had 2 natures– a higher (to achieve God’s purposes) + a lower nature (sinful or self-righteous). The lower nature pulled him down. He was incapable of doing the right thing. He knew the right thing to do but couldn’t do it. He laments at the end of 7: *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* (Romans 7:24-25)

The Old Testament was important. Without it, the human situation doesn't make sense. However...Jesus came to FULFILL the Old Covenant, not to extend or add to it. Jesus did something completely new.

Romans describes we are not saved by keeping the Law; we are saved by trusting in Him. Paul talks about this. The Law is good. But all the Law could do was tell him he was a sinner. The law condemned him because he was guilty. Salvation only comes through Jesus.

Romans 8:1-8

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

We live in a condemning culture.

***Spiritual condemnation.** *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.* John 10:10 The accuser, **Satan**, comes to condemn. But we also freely condemn others. **Self-righteousness**, whether from the right or the left, is repulsive. Humility, and the recognition that I, too, am a sinner saved only by grace, makes us approachable, relatable, and honest.

***Self-condemnation.** The opposite of self-righteousness. Self-talk. At 10 thoughts per minute, 600 per hour and 9,600 per day, we share very little of what we're thinking. Our self-talk tends to be negative and judgmental about others and about ourselves.

***Secular:** Political culture is vicious. We've seen rising aggression taking place. The incivility and unrest is like mob intimidation. "The call out culture" hasn't helped.

***Social Media/Technology.** Everyone has been concerned about COVID-19. It's a dangerous virus. But there's another virus that is also having an impact upon. Whereas the impact of COVID is daily news, the impact of technology and social media is also having an impact. It can also be like a virus that sweeps through us, manipulates and controls us. SM/T can do wonderful things in connecting people.

SM/T is amoral. Like fire, it can cook your meal or burn your house down. And it IS burning some houses down. It needs boundaries.

The movie *“The Social Dilemma”* describes the impact the internet and SM are having upon us.

- 1.) Users don’t realize we are being **deceived/manipulated** by a business enterprise.
- 2.) It is **addictive**.
- 3.) Users don’t realize the impact SM has upon our **identity/self-esteem**

Around 2012 there’s been a gigantic increase in teenage **depression**. Especially for girls.

How do they spend their time? They come home from school, get on their devices. A whole generation is more anxious, fragile & depressed. Much less comfortable taking risks. Getting drivers licenses, going out on a date. The Social Dilemma shows a young teen who gets “likes” (originally designed to help with “positivity”) and then gets a text that ridicules her appearance. *“Can you make your ears bigger?”* A meme of an elephant appears. “Snapchat dysmorphia” – cosmetic procedures where they could look more like they do in filtered selfies. It’s a gradual, slight, imperceptible change in your perception and behavior. It changes what you do, how you think, who you believe you are.

The book, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us* *“Teens who spend more time than average on screen activities are more likely to be unhappy, and those who spend more time than average on nonscreen activities are more likely to be happy. All screen activities are linked to less happiness, and all nonscreen activities are linked to more happiness. There’s not a single exception. 8th graders who spend 10 or more hours a week on social media are 56% more likely to say they’re unhappy than those who devote less time to social media. The opposite is true of in-person interactions. Those who spend an above-average amount of time with their friends in person are 20% less likely to say they’re unhappy than those who hang out for a below-average amount of time. The more time teens spend looking at screens, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression. If you were going to give advice for a happy adolescence based on this survey, it would be straightforward: Put down the phone, turn off the laptop, and do something – anything – that does not involve a screen. The correlations between depression*

and smartphone use are strong enough to suggest that more parents should be telling their kids to put down their phone.” A 13 yr old told a researcher: “When I spend time with my friends in person, they are often looking at their device instead of at me. ‘I’m trying to talk to them about something, and they don’t actually look at my face, they are looking at their phone. What does that feel like when you’re trying to talk to somebody face-to-face and they’re not looking at you? It hurts. I could be talking about something super important to me, and they wouldn’t even be listening.”

Steve was taking his final test at Texas Tech U. It was a very difficult subject – logic. The professor told them they could bring to the test a piece of 8 ½ x 11 notebook paper. The students crammed as many facts as they could onto their sheet. But one student walked into the class, but his one piece of paper on the floor and had an advanced logic student stand on the paper. Steve said the advanced student answered every question the student needed to know. He was that only student who received an “A.” On our own, WE cannot pass the test and have our sins forgiven, go to heaven and have a new identity. We must find our identity in one place and one place only – in Jesus.

Bottom line: Where will we get our self-esteem and identity? Social Media? Friends? Wealth? Health? Education? These can all be good things – but none are ultimate. They all lose their appeal after time.

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We must find our identity in one place and one place only – in Jesus. My life changed completely when I was 14 and in the 9th grade and Jesus came into my life. Bill Mason’s life changed when he was a young businessman in OKC.

One of the most beloved works of literature is Victor Hugo’s **Les Misérables**. Jean Valjean was in prison for stealing bread for his sister’s hungry kids. He tried to escape, was caught & had to serve another 7 yrs. He was bitter, cynical, and hardened. When released, no one would help him until a kindly old bishop opened his home to him, gave him food & a place to sleep. Jean can’t sleep that night. He paces the floor. As he walks through the house, he sees some golden candlesticks. He grabs them, considers bashing the Bishop’s skull, but only exits through the garden. He climbs the wall and escapes. The next day the housekeeper notices the missing candlesticks & told the Bishop she’d tried to

warn him about Jean. Then there was a knock @ the door. 2 Policemen have Jean w. the stolen candlesticks. The Bishop immediately seizes the situation and asks, *“Ah. There you are, Jean. I told you the candlesticks were yours. Why have you returned them?”* The officers’ reply: *“Then what he says is true?”* The police turn & leave. B & thief face each other. The Bishop turns and says to the thief, *“Jean Valean – you belong no longer to EVIL but to GOOD. I have purchased your soul with these silver candlesticks.”*

In a spiritual sense, we are no longer our own, either. We were bought with a price the blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross. He died for our sins. We should receive condemnation, but bc of X, our guilt and sin have been removed. We are freed from the bondage of sin/death by the all-consuming love of X.”

Most important Question I can ask you is “Do U know Jesus X?” Jesus will give you a new identity. You can be free. You no longer have to live under condemnation.