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More Than Conquerors Studies in Romans 8 Study 2 – No Condemnation (Romans 8:1-4)

On February 1, 2003, the space shuttle Columbia broke apart upon reentry, killing all seven crew members aboard. It was determined that upon launch a piece of foam detached from the external fuel tank and damaged the protective tiles on the left wing. When the Columbia reentered the earth's atmosphere, hot gases penetrated and damaged the wing, causing the shuttle to become unstable and break apart.

Throughout the 16-day mission, neither the crew on the shuttle nor at mission control were aware of the damage or of the imminent tragedy that awaited. The crew were condemned to death, though they didn't know it. This tragic event may help us understand the dire situation in which we find ourselves as sinners. Because of our sinful nature and our sinful actions, we are condemned to death, under God's righteous anger and judgement. Like the Columbia crew, we may go about our lives unaware or unconcerned about our fate. Yet the day will come when each of us will stand before a Holy God, and because of our sin face a fiery judgment.

Yet the first great promise we find in Romans chapter 8 is this, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus". If the Columbia tragedy had a Hollywood ending, there would have been a gallant rescue mission to save the crew. For them, there was no rescue mission. But for us, Jesus came so that He might live, suffer, die, and rise again to rescue us from our sin!

This is Paul's message in his letter of Romans. In 1:18-3:19 he paints a terrible picture of our desperate plight. He tells us that the **"wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness"** (1:18). He warns us that **"because of your stubborn and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"** (2:5). He reminds us that **"There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, there is not even one"** (3:10-12) and that **"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (3:23).

Jesus Himself described our dilemma:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18

The Columbia crew were condemned to an imminent, unavoidable fate. For them, there was no rescue. However, Paul goes on to share the lengths to which God went to save us from our precarious situation. In Romans 3:21-5:21 Paul relates how God sent His Son

Jesus Christ to live a perfect life, suffer a terrible death, and rise again so that we might be justified – made right with Him – and be rescued from our sin.

Paul teaches us that this rescue only takes place through faith. Our rescue is secured only when we repent and put our trust in Him. Paul describes in detail what Christ did for us in chapter 5.

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (5:1-2)

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (5:6-9)

Now in Romans 8, Paul begins to describe for us the marvelous results of this justification in the life of believers. This first promise must be some of the sweetest words we could ever hear:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

After laying out in detail how we are all condemned because of our sin, and how we can be saved from our sin and justified through faith in Christ, Paul proclaims that now there is no condemnation if we are in Christ.

Therefore – As we consider this wonderful statement, we must first determine to what the “therefore” is referring. Chapters 6 and 7 are parenthetical as Paul deals with some of the questions arise out of his teaching in 1-5. If you follow Paul’s reasoning you see that great claims and promises in chapter 8 follow his explanation of our salvation through faith in Christ summarized in chapter 5. Because of what Christ did on the cross, and because believers have placed their faith in Christ, therefore there is no condemnation.

Now – This points us to the change that takes place when we repent and put our faith in Christ. We were condemned. We were under God righteous anger and judgement. But NOW, since we have trusted Christ, we are justified, reconciled and made right with God. NOW, there is no condemnation.

No Condemnation – Condemnation is a legal term that refers to both the sentence – we are guilty – and the execution of the sentence – eternal punishment because of our sin against an infinitely Holy God. Jesus, though He had never sinned, was condemned in our place and took our sentence upon Himself so we could be set free from condemnation.

Who are in Christ Jesus – This describes the privileged people who now face no condemnation – those who are “in Christ Jesus”. “In Christ” is one of the most oft used terms to describe those who are believers in the New Testament. Paul describe in chapter 6 how through faith believers are “***united with Christ in the likeness of His death***” and shall also be “***in the likeness of His resurrection***”. If we are “in Christ” what is His becomes ours. We share in what He has done. When Christ died, we died. When Christ arose, we arose. Jesus illustrated this truth when He taught, “***I am the vine, you (believers) are the branches***” (John 15). Paul described it by teaching that all believers are “***members of one body***” (Romans 12:4-5).

Around the capitol, the immediate identification is Democrats and Republicans. On a much more important level, there are only two types of people in the statehouse, those who are in Christ, and those who are not. Those who are not are guilty, condemned, and facing God’s judgment for their sin. Those who are in Christ are forgiven, saved, and set free from God’s judgment since Christ took that upon Himself. So, it is no small question to ask if you are “in Christ” today!

Set free from the Law – Paul goes on in 8:2-4 to describe who those who have trusted Christ are “set

free from the law of sin in death”. The law (perhaps best summarized in the 10 Commandments) was given to inform us how sinful we are and how we can never live up to God’s holiness. If we were to be saved by keeping the law, we would have to keep it perfectly. Not one lie. Not one lustful thought. Not one angry word. Always loving God and loving others perfectly. Not one us can do that. And, according to the law, if we have broken it we deserve to be punished. The message of Romans is that Jesus lived a perfect life so that His keeping of the law could be credited to us. He suffered and died and was punished in our place so that our sin was credited to Him.

The Assurance We Find in Romans 8

Paul shares for us in Chapter 8 the assurance, joy, and victory believers have because of the truths he laid out in the previous chapters. What joy we can experience because there is ***now no condemnation***. What assurance we possess when we understand there is ***now no condemnation***. Paul writes so that we might know and understand the great blessings we have because our faith in what He has done for us.

The Rest of the Columbia Story

Space Shuttle Columbia Commander Rick Husband was a faithful and outspoken follower of Jesus Christ. He shared his faith openly and was very active in his home church. He loved music and sang in his church choir. Each day of the mission began with a wake-up message from mission control and usually included a song dedicated to one of the members of the crew. On day 6 the team was awakened by Steve Green, a close friend of Commander Husband’s, singing “*God of Wonders*”. Commander Husband’s response as they orbited above the Earth, “Looking out the window you really can tell He is a God of wonders”.

Commander Husband did not know that his earthly mission was going to end 10 days later. Yet he had the assurance that no matter what happened he faced no condemnation because he was in Christ. He gave clear testimony that he knew that neither life, not death, nor any other thing could separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39)

Let us seek to know and understand this same joy and assurance as we see these wonderful promises in Romans chapter 8.

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursday, January 25, 2018

8:00 AM MacManus Conference Room (MB254)

12:00 Noon Senate President’s Conference Room