

CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 2026
ROMANS 8:1-17

MATT KORFF

NO CONDEMNATION



A bagpipe player who played at funerals was recently asked by a funeral director to play and sing at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery out in the country. As he was not familiar with the area, he got lost. Finally, having arrived an hour late he saw that the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight.

There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch. He felt terribly bad and apologized to the men for being late. He went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. He didn't know what else to do, so He started to play. The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. He played out his heart and soul for that man with no family and friends. He played like He'd never played before for this homeless man.

As he played "Amazing Grace", the workers began to weep. They wept, the bagpipe player wept, they all wept together. When he finished, he packed his bagpipes, got into his car, and drove quietly away from the site. Though his head hung low, his heart was full.

After he drove off, the eldest of the workers wiped a tear from his eye, turned to the others and said, "I've never seen nothin' like that before and I've been putting in septic tanks for 25 years."

My oh my, how a little misdirection can lead you down the wrong path. This chapter is one of the most assuring chapters in the whole of Scripture, but has the potential to make someone think their salvation depends on their works after becoming a Christian.

Verse 1. What a beautiful verse.

There is now NO, nada, none, zero condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. This verse brings two major questions to my mind. The first question I have reading this text is what exactly is this "condemnation" that there is none of for the one belonging to Christ? The Greek word for condemnation here is "Katakrima" and it is only used two other times in the New Testament.

κατάκριμα

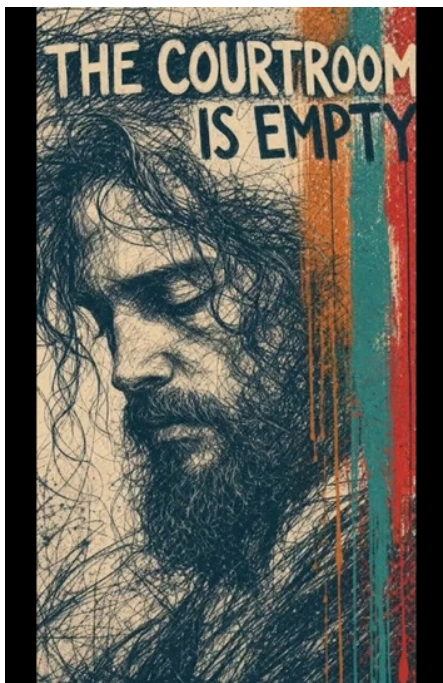
katakrima / condemnation; penalty

Erasmian Pronunciation

LOGOS

Krina means judgment, and kata is a preposition used here to amplify the word it is compounded with. So, not only judgment, but THE judgment. The two other times it is used are both in Romans, both in **Romans 5** actually. **Romans 5:16-18**.

In each of these places, this condemnation is reserved for those who do not receive the free gift of life, the justification, the making right that Jesus offers freely to one who would have it. In other words, whoever is condemned will be apart from God forever in hell. I was surprised to find that this word is not used in Revelation at all. I assumed it would be connected to the Great White Throne judgment, but it simply says that books were opened, and those not found in the book of life were cast into the lake of sulfur. So while the term is not used, the concept is.



If you belong to Christ, there will be none of that for you. **Verse 2.**

Not only do we get to belong to Christ, and are saved from the coming judgment, but God gives us His Holy Spirit to free us from the power of sin. This echoes Paul's words in **Romans 6:15-23**.

There are two powers fighting for control of you, the power of sin and the power of the Spirit. Last week, Keith beautifully illustrated the power of sin as an employer. When you belong to sin, you have to answer sin's call. But if you belong to Christ, the power of the Spirit has set you free from being a slave to the power of sin, you don't have to obey that boss anymore. Paul is making the case that we are not slaves to sin anymore. If you belong to Christ, you have been justified by Him, given His Spirit, and now do not have to obey sin anymore.

When Adam sinned, the nature of humanity changed. A cricket, by nature, glorifies God. Just doing what it does naturally. But you and me, different story. If I do what comes naturally, I do drugs, pornography, and will end up in prison. My history bears that out. Oh wretched man that am I. Who will save me from this sinful prison I am naturally in? Jesus Christ. And because He has made me right by His substitutionary sacrifice, God has given me His Holy Spirit, Who begins to change my nature. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, and empowers us to choose God's way rather than sin's way. Through obedience to the Holy Spirit, pointing us to God's word, we are ever increasingly freer and freer from sin, and conformed into the Image of Christ. There is a new power, a new law at work within the Christian.

Rather than being alive to sin and dead to God's laws and ways, the Holy Spirit regenerates us—regenerate simply means rebirth—to be alive to God's laws and ways, and dead to sin. We are already/not yet perfect in God's eyes. The moment that we put our trust in Jesus is the moment that God sees us as perfect and sinless, that is called justification, but the process of walking with the Spirit is called sanctification.



The question of how we are made right in God's sight, even though we are sinners is answered in **verse 3-4**.

This brings about a question as to why God gave Israel the law in the first place. What Paul seems to be implying here, is that God gave Israel a 2nd shot. Their—and our—forefather Adam blew the first shot: "Don't eat the fruit." So God gave Israel a second shot: "Keep this law," that you can't keep, that no one could ever keep. That doesn't seem very fair now does it? But that was not the intention of the law. If you can remember back when we were in **Romans 3**, Paul says, in **Romans 3:20**.

The law was not given as a second chance for us, but to show us that we are sinful. Paul seems to make it sound like the law was given for a 2nd chance, and—in a way—it was. It was the law that Jesus followed, to a T, in order to be called the righteous, perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb, so that He could become the perfect substitute for sinners. The righteous one for the wicked one. He became like us, but the law did not show Him that He was a sinner, it showed Him that He is righteous.

Gregory of Nazianzus, a church father who lived around 350AD, in response to an argument that Jesus had a human body but did not have a human mind, said, "What is not assumed is not redeemed." This comment illustrates that Jesus humbled Himself in every way to become like man, in order to redeem man from the curse. Jesus did not come as an angel, He did not come as a dog, He did not come as a cat, so He did not redeem angels, dogs, or cats. He came as a man to redeem man, to fully follow the law so that He could trade His righteous fulfillment of God's law onto us, freeing the Spirit to dwell fully with man.

There is a song titled "His robes for mine." One of the verses of that song says:

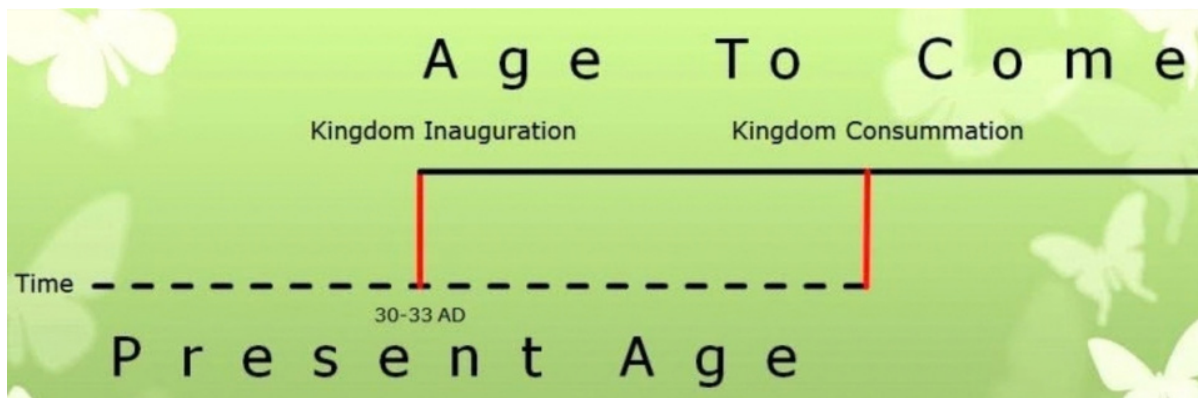
His robes for mine, what cause have I for dread?
God's daunting law, Christ mastered in my stead
Faultless, I stand with righteous works not mine
Saved by my Lord's vicarious death and life
I cling to Christ and marvel at the cost
Jesus forsaken, God estranged from God
Bought by such love, my life is not my own
My praise, my all, shall be for Christ alone

Verse 1-4

Verse 5-9. Now, with the beautiful promise of there being no condemnation for those who are in Christ, comes this set of verses that, if understood incorrectly, could leave you playing the bagpipes for plumbers.

Ok, so I still sin, does this mean that all those good things just said about those in Christ only apply to those who don't sin anymore? Now, there are two extreme views that lead people to question their and others' salvation, and leave them with fear. The first is that you can walk away from your salvation. The other is that you can't lose your salvation, but if you are sinning, then you need to question if you are actually saved, because otherwise you wouldn't be sinning. This passage, if taken the wrong way, can lead people to think one of those two ways. Paul is not giving any qualifiers here. I wish he would have just said, "I am not talking about the struggle with sin, but those who have no desire to follow the Spirit," but he doesn't say that. So if I still struggle with sin does that mean I have no assurance? By no means. If that were so, then how could Paul say, just a few verses earlier. **Romans 7:14-25.**

The struggle with sin will remain in you as long as you remain in this body, like Keith said last week, we are already righteous, but not yet. There is a war going on, a war between two powers, two laws: The law of sin and the law of the Spirit. I sin daily, but as Paul says, "That which I don't want to do, that is often what I do, and the good thing I want to do, I don't often do." I was just thinking the other day, and this is crazy to think about. Before Christ, when I did all the terrible things I used to do, I thought I was a pretty good person. Now that I know Christ, I think I'm a terrible person. What a conundrum. I believe the reason you ask someone who doesn't know Christ if they are a good person and they say, "Yes," is because they are always comparing themselves to someone worse than they are. But a Christian has learned not to compare themselves with others but with Christ. You will fall short every time in that comparison.



The one who does not compare themselves to anyone but Christ says, along with Paul. **1 Timothy 1:15-16.**

The other day I was reflecting on who I was before Christ, and you won't believe this, because you probably think I am a pretty good guy because otherwise I wouldn't be up here teaching the word of God, but about 2008, so 18 years ago, I was army crawling through a car lot where I worked, after hours, while the salesman was working with a customer, going for the safe, so I could buy a bus ticket, a gun, and go to Mexico City. And I was going to do that. Drugs, crime, hood-life was my life. But God.

But even though I am not that man, I am still a sinner—but I want the things of God. I have a t-shirt at home that says on the front, "I am not the man I ought to be but..." Then on the back it says, "Thank God I am not the man I used to be." Brothers and sisters, in Christ, that is the struggle with sin. I often tell people that it is good to give your testimony, but the person most affected by your testimony is yourself. If you knew what was going on inside me as I army crawled through those offices, then sure, my testimony would help you just as much, but you don't, only God and I know what was going on in me. To dig through all the hopeless despair that I was in at that point is to see how far God has brought me, His Spirit testifying with my spirit that I am a child of God. And I am sure there are several of you out here saying in your heart and mind, "Amen."

Is that because I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps? By no means, but because God so loved me that He gave His Son, so that I might believe in Him and not perish but have eternal life, and you can too.

Verse 10-11. Man, it just keeps getting better. Not only am I not condemned, not only am I changed and no longer a slave to my sin, but even though my body wastes away, I am being renewed by the Spirit of God and that same Spirit, Who raised Christ from the dead, will raise my body as well. Paul says it this way in **2 Corinthians 4:7-18**.

Because of sin our bodies are mortal, but because of God's Spirit, our mortal bodies will rise again. Don't miss in here that we will not just leave these bodies and go to heaven, never seeing them again, sure, maybe for a time, but our physical bodies will rise again.

I think that is one of the strongest arguments for the validity of Christianity, that it depends on the body. If the Apostles were making this up, they could have said, "Jesus died in the flesh and rose spiritually as God back to the throne—because God is Spirit," but no, from day 3 they were saying His body got up and walked out of that grave.

Now, I am not that bright, and I am sure there were some brighter Pharisees and Sadducees, and Romans who would have thought to stop the lie, all they have to do is go to the grave and show His body, but they didn't. To stomp out the pesky cult of Jesus followers all they had to do was present the body. But what did they do? They said His disciples stole the body.

Now, I don't know if you have ever tried to take some gold out of Fort Knox, but with Pilate's seal and Roman soldiers at the tomb it would be a similar heist to take Jesus' body out of the tomb, and what for? When you can just say He rose spiritually. Probably because He actually did get up and walk out of that grave. And what does Him walking out of that grave mean? That you too will walk out of your grave if you know Jesus. **Verse 10-11.**



Verse 12-14. So here comes another therefore, which makes you ask, "What is the therefore there for?" The therefore is there for the purpose of connecting our obedience to God with His great gift of life. This isn't a, "Oh you better do this or I will zap you off the face of the earth," no, this is a "Now that you know what life is, go live it."

I mentioned this a couple Monday nights ago at Bible study here at Calvary, but it strikes me that other religions teach self-restraint, but when they go to heaven they get to indulge in sin. What's the point of the restraint? In Islam, when men get to heaven they get 72 virgins.

Is that God's idea? If they teach that sexual immorality is wrong, then why would heaven be about indulging in sexual immorality? No, brothers and sisters, heaven is God's heaven, and the power of the Holy Spirit—sanctification—Is God preparing you to enjoy His heaven. Sin is called sin because it will not be in heaven, and if you just got sad that you won't be able to enjoy your favorite sin in heaven you have missed the point of the Gospel.



God created the world and everything in it. Man fell away from God, and since Genesis 3 God has been in the business of restoring the world to Himself, to His original intention—which is without sin.

So sanctification is not a “beat my body into submission, so that one day I can fully indulge its every pleasure,” sanctification is recognizing the true creation intent and putting everything else in your life to death so you can live to the full, live abundantly, live your fullest life, finding true pleasures, true meaning. The philosopher G.K. Chesterton once said, “Meaninglessness is not found in being weary of pain, meaninglessness is found in being weary of pleasure.” Worldly pleasures, sin, indulging lead to a bigger hole in the heart than when you first started them. Only God, and obedience to Him will bring pleasure that fills the void.

So, should I be scared that I may not have made the cut because I keep struggling with sin? By no means, for how could he say **Verse 15-17**

When we belong to Christ, we have not received a spirit that makes us fearful slaves, but God’s Spirit which is the seal of adoption. If God’s Spirit is in you, you desire to please Him, however faulty you might be, because you recognize what He has paid, His own blood, to free you from death.

So, how did this message apply to me:

1. Peace. Because there is no condemnation to those who belong to Christ, you should breath a breath of fresh air, and bask in the free gift of God’s grace.
2. Motivation change. Be motivated out of love for what God has done for you, not fearful, thinking you are one mistake away from losing Christ’s free gift. If you can lose it, it is not a free gift, because then you would have to pay to keep it.
3. Perseverance. God is sanctifying us to conform us to the image of His Son, which is the original creation intent, and what gives us the most satisfying life.

Finally, as we read **verse 1** at the beginning of this message, I said there were two major questions that were brought to my mind, I imagine some of you thought I had trailed off and forgotten to address the 2nd question. The second question is saved for the end because it is the most important question anyone could ever ask: How can I belong to Jesus?

You can belong to Jesus by asking Him to forgive your sins and asking for the gift of His Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead, and will raise you from the dead.