



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, July 10-16 (A) – Romans 8:1-11

Focus: *No Condemnation in Christ*

word of life

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1 NRSV)

Read Romans 8:1-11

The lectionary texts for the next three weeks are from the eighth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans. (The text of Romans 8: 6-11 is also used on the Fourth Sunday in Lent in Year A.) Earlier in his letter, Paul explained what it means to be justified by faith. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand...” (Romans 5:1-2 NRSV) Because God chose to act in Jesus Christ, we are the recipients of God’s grace.

In chapter 8, Paul reverses things by referring to the possibility and fear of condemnation. Maybe it is too much for us to grasp the positive gift of grace extended by God through Jesus Christ. Paul writes with clarity, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1 NRSV) That statement provides a bottom line like none before.

1. *What would it mean to be condemned by God?*
2. *Which is easier for you to believe: being justified by faith or having no condemnation for those who are in Christ? Explain your answer.*

No condemnation. These bold words by Paul remind us in no uncertain terms of the saving effect of God’s actions in Jesus Christ. The law did not serve its purpose to bring people into a right relationship with God. Thus, God sent Jesus Christ to take on human flesh and to deal with the power of sin over humanity. Condemnation was never the intention of God.

3. *Describe your feelings when you hear about no condemnation for those who are in Christ.*
4. *What concerns do you have for those who are not in Christ?*

Freedom is one of the direct consequences of being united with Christ. There are two aspects of our freedom. In Christ, we are boldly set free *from* the law of sin and death itself. But what comes next? We are also set free *for* something.

5. *What are you set free from?*
6. *What are you set free for?*

Paul reminds us that we are free to walk by the Spirit of God. That means setting our mind on Christ, allowing the Spirit to guide, shape, inspire, and challenge us. Paul writes, “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.” (Romans 8:5 NRSV)

Paul describes two options: setting our mind on the flesh (and death itself) or setting our mind on the Spirit (and life). The first option leaves us in a hostile relationship with God and with little hope. But to set our mind on the Spirit and to dwell in Christ makes all the difference for our life on this earth and beyond. Thanks be to God! “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1 NRSV)

7. *How might we be tempted to set our minds on the flesh?*
8. *What does it mean for you to set your mind on the Spirit?*

Word *among us*

The campers were working hard on thank-you cards for their parents. Earlier the campers had been photographed so that each card could include a personalized note with an individual photo. As the photos were being distributed, one girl looked at a photo and announced, “He’s ugly!” The counselor looked shocked! The girl attempted to defend herself by saying, “It’s ok. He’s my brother. I can say that.”

Unfortunately, some children grow up hearing negative words to describe themselves. Some cannot find any positive words to claim as adjectives for their lives. From a young age, they have been condemned by words.

1. *How do words hurt?*
2. *How might words heal?*
3. *What impact might condemning words have on children?*
4. *What is the most condemning thing someone could say to another person?*

When Paul writes his letter to the Romans, he is dealing with much more than words used to describe oneself. For those who have perhaps been condemned by words, Paul proclaims words of affirmation and acceptance when he writes, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1 NRSV) This gift of grace gives hope for this life and for the life to come.

5. *What does Paul mean when he says there is no condemnation for those in Christ?*
6. *How concerned are you about being condemned by God?*

It is difficult to fathom the reality of no condemnation. The shackle of fear is lifted—once and forever. The shackle of death is removed—once and forever.

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

Some preachers attempt to bring followers to Christ by terrifying them to death. Their descriptions of hell and its fiery furnace can leave people shaking in their pews. It would be interesting to hear those preachers preach a sermon on Romans 8:1. For this passage overflows with God’s love made known in Christ—a love which draws followers because of the depth and breadth of love. “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1 NRSV) No condemnation. None.

Take a moment to reflect on preachers, teachers, and others who have invited you to hear a message of God’s love. Consider who has taught you about grace. Reflect on those who convinced you that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

7. *Who has taught you to understand this passage from scripture?*
8. *With whom would you like to share this passage?*

Prayer

With grateful hearts we offer you, O God of grace, our praise – today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen

last word

Be careful with your words,
so they heal rather than condemn.

Daily Faith Practices

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2014 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/dailyfaithpractices