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Romans 8:1-4 – ***Grounded: No Condemnation***

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Romans 8:1-4

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

*...There they saw Aslan and Edmund walking together in the dewy grass, apart from the rest of the court. There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying, but it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot. (C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 174)*

“A conversation which Edmund never forgot...”

Words that changed his life forever...

Words that must have spoke deep into his heart...

But words that remain a mystery to us.

Edmund is one of the four Pevensie children...

Who stumble into the magical land of Narnia in C.S. Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Edmund struggles though:

He's mean to his younger sister, Lucy;

He's always trying to prove himself and outdo his older brother, Peter;

And he just seems to have a nasty chip on his shoulder.

Maybe this is fair enough—

Because this kind of thing happens between siblings...

Especially when you're in the middle—

But Edmund takes it a couple of steps further.

One day, Edmund ends up in Narnia by himself...

And he is met by the White Witch—

The evil person (antagonist) in the story.

Deep in his heart...

Edmund knows that this White Witch is bad news.

But he's enticed by her magic.

He's sucked in by her promise to make him a Prince and one day a King.

Edmund is hungry for power...

He wants others to look up to him.

And so, he ends up committing some serious offenses:

He betrays his siblings...

Giving up their position to the White Witch;

He sides with the enemy...

Telling the Witch of their plan to put an end to her reign;

And finally, Edmund mocks the great Lion, Aslan—

The King of Narnia and son of the Emperor-Over-the-Sea—

Saying, "Pooh! Who's afraid of Aslan?"

As we know...

Treason is a serious offense—

Betraying your family, friends, or country—

In some cases, it's punishable by death.

Not to mention the seriousness of mocking the King of the land.

As we have it, Edmund stands condemned...

Facing a dreadful penalty when he's caught.

I want to ask you, how do you think Edmund *feels*?

As the ice over his heart starts to melt—

And it becomes a little clearer what he has done—

How does Edmund *feel*?

Well, how do we feel?

How do we feel when we've done something selfish?

How do you feel after you let someone else take the fall for you because you were afraid of the consequences?

How do you feel when you step on someone in order to get recognition from a teacher or boss?

How do you feel after you hurt someone with your words?

You yell at them...

You're cold towards them...

You pick on them for things they have no control over.

How do you feel when you hurt someone by your actions?

You promise them you won't do *it* again...

But you can't keep from doing it...

Whatever *it* is.

How do you *feel*?

You feel guilty.

You feel shame.

You want to go back and undo it...

But you can't.

The Apostle Paul—

The great missionary and evangelist of the early Church...

A proclaimer and defender of the gospel of Jesus Christ—

Knows the feeling of standing condemned.

It was Paul who tried to destroy the church...

Dragging off men and women and putting them in prison for their confession of Christ... (Acts 8:3)

Persecuting the people of the church to their death. (Acts 22:4)

It was at Paul's feet that people laid their coats as Stephen was stoned. (Acts 7)

It was Paul—

As we heard last week—

Who said, "I can't help doing what I don't want to do."

"I know what is right, but I can't do it!" (Rom 7)

How did Paul *feel* about all of this?

"O wretched man I am!"

Guilt and self-loathing.

"I am the least of the apostles."

"I don't deserve to be called an apostle."

Paul knows what it's like to stand condemned:

Condemned as a breaker of God's Law;

Condemned as a persecutor of the church.

It's a common human feeling:

Guilt.

Fear over consequences.

Feeling like we could have done better...

Like we should have done things differently.

These are the feelings behind Romans 8...

And these are the words given to Paul—

Given to this broken man full of guilt...

Full of self-hatred—

These are the words that are given to us:

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

“No condemnation.”

But how is this possible?

How can God give these words to Paul?

How can God give these words to us?

We who have seriously offended his majesty...

We who have seriously violated the covenant we share with our fellow human beings.

How can God speak these words of healing and grace over us:

“No condemnation.”

This is what Paul explains in verses 2-4.

He uses the word “for” to start both statements...

And with each statement he digs deeper into the “how?” of “no condemnation.”

“For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (8:2)

How is there “no condemnation”?

Because we’ve been set free from the law of sin and death.

There is an authority or power that we used to live under...

An authority that Paul calls sin and death.

For Edmund, it was living under the rule of the White Witch...

Doing her bidding and seeking her benefits...

But always reaping death.

Edmund desperately wants to escape...

But he’s unable...

The witch is too powerful...

Running him deeper and deeper into the ground.

For us, it’s the internal corruption that makes a mess of our lives...

It’s the inability to say “no” to those things that harm our bodies and souls.

It’s the inability to walk in conformity to God’s ways.

It’s that voice that is always in our mind saying:

“You’re not good enough.”
 “You should be a better daughter.”
 “You really should be a better dad.”
 “You should have been promoted by now.”
 “You should be a better student.”
 “You should be married by now.”
 “You should be skinnier.”
 “If you really were a good Christian _____”
 “You’re not good enough.”
 “God isn’t happy with you.”

We know the voice of condemnation...

We may not call it that...

But that’s exactly what it is.

It tries speaking to us every hour of every day...

Dragging us down.

In Christ though...

There is freedom.

The authority and power of the Spirit sets us free!

Captives are released...

Bondage is broken.

No longer living under the authority of sin and death...

We are led into life...

Like slaves running out of their prison...

Free from the guilt of sins past...

And now able to stand up to that condemning voice inside of us:

“No condemnation,” we tell it.

“I’ve been set free.”

“You no longer dictate my life!”

“I’m no longer obligated to listen to you.”

“I’m set free from the law of sin and death.”

This is the first layer under “no condemnation...”

But Paul goes deeper.

No condemnation...

For in Christ Jesus we’ve been set free...

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us... (8:3-4)

In summary, “we couldn’t, but God did.”

There was a way for us to stay right with God...

A way to stay in God’s favor...

A way to avoid condemnation...

A way to have life...

It was called keeping the law.

The law was given to guide us in our relationship with God.

But we couldn’t keep it.

Instead of giving us life...

The law ultimately led to death.

Not because the law is bad...

But because of our overwhelming tendency toward sin.

The law was weakened by our sinful nature...

And what the law did was point out our failings.

The law couldn’t save us...

The law couldn’t give us everlasting life...

It only added reason for our condemnation.

So what *we* couldn’t do...

What the law couldn't do...

God did.

“God did by sending his own Son to be a sin offering.”

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*...

Edmund's offenses don't go unpunished.

They're not counted against him...

But they don't just disappear either.

The White Witch reminds Aslan of the Deep Magic laws...

That says every treachery must be paid for...

And it must be paid for in blood.

Aslan knows this is true—

That Edmund's sentence is death—

But he doesn't allow Edmund's blood to be shed.

Instead, Aslan himself submits to the punishment...

Allowing the knife of the Witch to take his life.

Every sin *we* commit must be paid for.

The righteous requirement of the law must be fulfilled...

The law must be upheld.

If we want to be restored—

If we want life—

We have to pay for our offense against the law...

And we have to follow it perfectly.

But, we can't.

So, what we were unable to do...

God himself did in Jesus Christ.

God the Son was given as a sin offering for us.

Jesus became one of us—

Fully human...

Knowing pain, anger, sadness, and temptation—

Yet he obeyed the law...

He was without sin.

So, when he gave up his life on the cross...

He paid the penalty that was rightfully ours...

And we were credited with the righteousness that was rightfully his.

He pays for our sin...

And we get his obedience.

These are the words that I believe Aslan shared with Edmund...

Words that were a healing balm to his wounds...

Words that Edmund would never forget...

Words that would steer the course of Edmund's life from here on out:

“No condemnation.”

“There will be no penalty for your treason.”

“It will not be held against you for your mocking of the King of the land.”

“No condemnation.”

After the conversation Aslan has with Edmund...

He brings Edmund back to his brother and sisters and says:

“Here is your brother, and there is no need to talk to him about what is past.”

“No condemnation.”

The past has been paid for...

And the future has been secured.

In Christ Jesus there is no condemnation.

This is the balm we desperately need for our wounds.

“No condemnation.”

We need to hear these words from God every time we wrestle with sin and fall:

“No condemnation.”

We need to hear these words every time the guilt of our past comes up:

“No condemnation.”

Every time that voice in your head says:

“You’re not good enough”;

“God isn’t happy with you”;

“God is waiting to punish you...”

We need to hear the words, “No condemnation.”

These are words that will never leave us...

This freedom from condemnation will always be ours...

Because the sacrifice of Christ will always remain...

It will always be enough.

May we walk in the freedom of this declaration over our lives;

May we find comfort, healing and assurance in Christ’s sacrifice for us;

And may it lead us in living lives of thanksgiving to our God.

Amen.