

The God of Love and Fury, Tim Keller

[00:00:00.410] - Speaker 1

And we come today to the maybe the most famous verse of the Bible and the context. So, I'm going to read in chapter three, just verses 16 through 21.

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¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned. But whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹This is the verdict light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

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²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

This is God's word.

Look at verse 18. Very important.

[00:01:07.220] - Speaker 1

There's a number of things in the passage that we've looked at before, like light and darkness, which is a major theme in the Gospel of John. But today, especially verse 18 ***whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already.*** I was reading in Newsweek about a Newsweek magazine had an article on baby boomers returning to church. I thought, oh, I'm a baby boomer, I'm in church. This has to do with me.

[00:01:35.300] - Speaker 1

And I'm not sure it did. It mentioned the fact that in many, many growing churches the word sin and condemnation have been airbrushed out of the language of that spiritual culture. No talk of condemnation, no talk of sin, no talk of hell. And yet what's interesting is here in this passage we see the very word condemnation come out. One person in the article said there are no do's and don'ts around here.

[00:02:08.010] - Speaker 1

The minister has banished hell and condemnation from his vocabulary. And here we're told that a person who does not believe in Jesus Christ stands condemned already. And verse 36, just restates it. It says the same thing, only in a more stark way. But it's obvious that the Gospel writer is saying in verse 36 of the of the chapter the same thing he's saying in verse 18.

[00:02:30.850] - Speaker 1

In verse 36 he says, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. But whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. Now, we struggle so much with the idea of a wrathful god, a god who condemns. We struggle a great deal with it. And that's what we have to take a look at today, because the Bible here puts God's condemnation in close proximity to the most famous verse on love anywhere in the Bible.

[00:03:01.910] - Speaker 1

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. The Bible never sees God's love and his wrath or his condemnation or his fury as being opposed to each other. And we do. And what are we going to do about that? You see, the Bible continually sees these two things as together.

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Not only do we think that they're opposed to each other, and it's true that in this world, in a very broken and fallen world, we often find that love and justice live intention. But the Bible tells us that in God's nature, not only are they not intention, but they establish each other. They are meaningless apart from each other. It's not just that God is all fury or all love. He's both love and fury, both love and wrath.

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And it's not just that those two things are fused together so that he's of some kind of split personality, but rather those two things absolutely meld together because his fury is always loving fury and his love is always furious love. Because his love and fury are not like ours. They're holy. His fury is a holy fury and wrath. His love is a holy love.

[00:04:13.250] - Speaker 1

We can't get inside that because we're different. Now, let me just speak for myself. I won't speak for you, but a lot of you, I'm sure, can understand this. Whenever I get angry, whenever I get furious, when it's over, I'm embarrassed because I do all kinds of things that I'm embarrassed about now. Ordinarily I'll say, well, I didn't mean that, that wasn't really me, I was so angry.

[00:04:42.020] - Speaker 1

But the reason I'm embarrassed is actually the opposite. The reason I'm embarrassed is because you if you saw me angry, and even I, as I saw myself angry, I was embarrassed by what myself really was. Like I say, it's not really me that did that, but actually, I'm embarrassed because for a moment the curtain was blown away and my self-absorption and my image consciousness and my overweening ego and my self-centeredness was revealed for everybody to see, including me. And I was humiliated. See, when you get angry, your anger is released against anything that gets in the way of your happiness, of your comfort, of your image, of your reputation, of your ego.

[00:05:26.870] - Speaker 1

And because of that, because our anger is full of self, we are so embarrassed. And we can't imagine an angry god because we think of his anger like ours, but it's not at all that way. And here's what I want to point out. This is the thesis and I'll get back to it at the end. And it's the one thing I want you to or the two things I guess I want you to bring away with you today.

[00:05:49.710] - Speaker 1

God is not just a god of love or just a god of wrath, but he is a god of both. And your concept of God is so fundamental to who you are. If you do see only a loving god who never says no, or if you only see a harsh, angry god who never says yes. Not only is that a distortion of reality, but then that belief will distort your life in one way or the other. You are deeply and profoundly affected by your view of God and your understanding of God.

[00:06:26.540] - Speaker 1

And therefore, to understand that he's a god, both of love and fury is critical. Are you ready? What we talk about here this morning is critical to the way in which you live your life, how you make your decisions, how you regard other people, how you think about yourself, how you relate to the world around you. The biblical understanding is this first, God's wrath is actually an expression of his love, his love of truth. Secondly, God's wrath is really an expression of his love for his people and his creation.

[00:07:00.320] - Speaker 1

And lastly, but most profoundly, God's love and his wrath or his fury are both satisfied and meet and coincide on the cross. Unless you understand the cross, you will either believe God is a god who never says no and you'll be a self. You might say you'll be an indulged, a spoiled child, or else you will find that your god is a god of anger and fury who always says no, and you'll be an abused child.

[00:07:31.570] - Speaker 1

Are you following this? To be a spoiled, indulged child or to be an abused and neglected child are both terrible, and they both will distort your reality. You have to understand who God is. Who is God? Here's who he is?

[00:07:50.150] - Speaker 1

First, God is a god of fury, but we have to understand that his fury, his anger is actually an expression of his love for the truth and of standards. A lot of people say, I can't believe in a god who condemns. I can't believe in a god of wrath. I can believe in a loving god. Here's my first,

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the first point I want to make is be very careful that rather than thinking for yourself, you're simply being molded and shaped by your culture. Where did we get the original idea that God was a loving god? Did we get it by reading the newspaper? We just see how the life is going and we say, oh, it's so obvious that God's a god of love. Did you get it from reading history books?

[00:08:29.260] - Speaker 1

You read the history of humankind and you say, oh, it's so clear from reading the history that God is a god of love. Do you get it from reading the works of the other religions? I used to think it was there, but it's not. If you go into Islam, into Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism and so on, and say, where do we get the concept of a loving, personal shepherd, ally, intimate, father, brother, where do we get that idea? It doesn't come from those religions.

[00:08:59.440] - Speaker 1

It came from the Bible. And I want you to know that originally it was considered very odd and strange because human society for many, many years, believed in the survival simply of the fittest. It was right for me to put my clan, my family, my tribe or my nation and put its interests as preeminent over others. It was right for me, if I could do it, to attack and enslave weaker people. It was right for me to do that.

[00:09:24.070] - Speaker 1

And if somebody had the audacity to attack me, I could pay him back, doubly, everybody believed that. And so along comes the Christian ethic. Human society could understand a god of wrath. They could understand a god who is righteous and puts down rebellion and holds up standards of righteousness.

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But it couldn't really understand a loving god, a forgiving god, a merciful god, a god who accepts people who are terribly wicked. Couldn't believe that, didn't like the idea of the love ethic, turn the other cheek, treat every person, even the weakest, as if they were infinitely viable. It couldn't handle that. A friend of mine who was a historian at Yale once told me, for example, just to show you how our thinking has changed, he says, modern people think about slavery, and we say, how could people have ever accepted such a monstrosity?

[00:10:14.190] - Speaker 1

And my friend said, listen, that's not the way you should be thinking. A historian asked this question considering the fact that it was universally believed by all societies that we had the right to attack and enslave weaker people, since everybody always did it. The real question is, why did anybody, why did it occur to anybody that it was wrong, whoever got that idea? And the historian says very clear, and people pretty much figure it out, it's from the Bible. It's the attitude of the Bible.

[00:10:45.480] - Speaker 1

It's the teaching of the Bible, it's the idea of a loving god that originally gave us that. But times have changed. Now we live in a completely different culture and Western culture. Whereas it once trampled on the individual, it exalts the individual.

[00:10:59.220] - Speaker 1

And it says this today, and you're getting this from every side. It says, nobody can tell you what's right or wrong for you. There are no such things as religions that are superior and that are right and so some people are going to heaven and some people are going to hell. Everybody has to find their own god.

[00:11:16.060] - Speaker 1

Everybody has to find their own religion. The one condition for free society is the belief that everybody is wrong about religion. Everybody is right for them, but not right for everybody else. Alan Bloom says this, he says, "The only way in which we think of today, we look back at history and we say this, men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecution, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism."

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The point today is not for us to correct the mistakes and be right, but rather we must all realize that we're not right at all. You see now in this atmosphere, you have to have a totally privatized god, the idea that there are absolute moral standards, regardless of what you believe that are right and that God upholds them, regardless of your beliefs, regardless of your feelings, regardless of your needs, God upholds them. That idea is repugnant to our modern civilization. It's repugnant to modern society. Now, what I want to know is if you find the idea of a wrathful god repugnant, it could be it's because you find the idea of absolute standards, absolute truth repugnant.

[00:12:31.960] - Speaker 1

And that's all that the Bible's teaching. When it talks about God's condemnation, it simply means he's a god of standards.

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And, you know, I want to know what makes you think that you are right today when if you were born 300 years and you went with a prevailing culture, you would have thought that the god of love is a stupid idea. And now you think that a god of wrath is a stupid idea. Are you ready to think for yourself?

[00:12:59.130] - Speaker 1

Consider the problem our society's got right now. Every year people are saying, when are we going to get values back? When are we going to start teaching ethics? When are we going to get values back in the school? And as soon as somebody says that, somebody else asks, whose values?

[00:13:13.870] - Speaker 1

And we're stymied because we now know that objective science and reason cannot give us values and ethics because all values and all ethics are religiously based.

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And therefore, we say, on the one hand, it leads to strife to believe that some religions are right and that there's absolute moral standards and some people are going to heaven and some people are going to hell depending on them. It's wrong to believe that. However, then we turn around and say, ah, but be generous, be honest, respect life, be loyal. C. S.

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Lewis puts it this way in a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make people without chess and expect them to have virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful. We take away the idea of absolute morality and standards and then we insist that people be moral.

[00:14:11.890] - Speaker 1

Christianity gives us a completely different vision. It talks about a god of standards. And because it talks about a god of standards, therefore we begin to understand what it means when we talk about a god of wrath. God's wrath is not crankiness. It's not an ill temper.

[00:14:27.990] - Speaker 1

Imagine this as an illustration. Here's a man that robs a bank. Now, how does the governor of the state in which he robbed the bank and how does the bank president, how do those two people feel about this guy? Well, they feel rather differently. The bank president is extremely upset.

[00:14:47.610] - Speaker 1

He's red in the face. He just wants to tear that man to pieces. I can't believe he did that. On the other hand, the governor of the state as the governor might even not, he doesn't have this emotion necessarily.

[00:15:03.470] - Speaker 1

As a matter of fact, what if the governor or the police magistrate or the judge knows the man who was the robber? They might even like the guy. But the point is, when a man has broken the law of the state, the state now bans him. The state is opposed to him. It's a judicial wrath.

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Think it's a judicial wrath. That means that man can't vote. That man can't run for office. That man can't buy or sell or set up a business. He's under a ban.

[00:15:27.680] - Speaker 1

There is an opposition and settled opposition of the state to him until the debt is paid. And if you're a judge or a policeman or even the governor and you know the robber, you don't have necessarily you might be sad, you don't have any necessarily any vindictive feelings, but you are opposed to him. When the Bible talks about the wrath of God, it's talking about God's settled opposition to evil. His opposition, do you hear that? The way the government has to oppose the law breaker until the debt is paid.

[00:16:02.450] - Speaker 1

The judge might say, oh, I hate to see what this poor guy has done to himself, I knew his family, I knew his father. He's robbed the bank. How awful. But we have to uphold the law, otherwise we won't even have a society here.

[00:16:12.860] - Speaker 1

I am opposed to you. I'm after you. I'm pressing you. Do you see that? And that is what the Bible says is the wrath of God.

[00:16:21.930] - Speaker 1

It's a subtle opposition. We were all built by him. We were all created by him. We owe him everything. We should dedicate everything to him.

[00:16:29.290] - Speaker 1

We want to go and live our own lives, our own way. We want to be our own masters. That's wrong. That's law breaking. And God is opposed to us until the debt is paid.

[00:16:44.210] - Speaker 1

Don't you see, then? God's wrath isn't crankiness. It arises out of a love of truth. It arises out of a love of righteousness, of standards. Now, secondly, we said, you also can't understand God's wrath unless you understand that his wrath arises from a love for his creation, for people.

[00:17:05.190] - Speaker 1

Now, that may not make much sense at first, but please think about it. One of the books that I enjoy very much and I've recommended it to you here from this podium before. It's a book by Becky Pippard called Hope Has Its Reasons. And one of the things that I love about the book is how she talks about God's anger. There's a section in which she discusses this and she says, we struggle with the idea of an angry god.

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I thought God was a god of love. How could God get angry against sin and condemn? And she says, at one point in the book this, think of how you feel when we see someone we love ravaged by wrong actions or relationships. How do you feel? Do you feel benign tolerance?

[00:17:43.650] - Speaker 1

And then she speaks of watching two talented friends of hers sinking deep into destruction through drug abuse. She says, quote, I feel fury when I'm with them. Everything in me wanted to shake them. Can't you see? Don't you know what you're doing to yourself?

[00:17:57.430] - Speaker 1

You become less and less yourself every time I see you. Real love, she says, stands against the deception, the lie, the sin that destroys. Anger and love are inseparably, bound in human experience. She writes, and if I, a flawed, narcissistic, sinful woman, can feel this much pain and anger over someone's condition, how much more a morally perfect god who made them? Anger isn't the opposite of love.

[00:18:24.850] - Speaker 1

Hate is the opposite of love. And the final form of hate is indifference. Anger isn't the opposite of love, hate is. And the final form of hate is indifference. It's silly to think that anger and love are opposed to each other.

[00:18:37.050] - Speaker 1

And that's the reason why we say God's love isn't opposed to anger. If anything, God is angry because there is a cancer in his creation, and that cancer is sin and that cancer is evil, and he wants to eradicate it, and he must deal with it. And he can't have benign tolerance toward it. If you want to get the gist of it, just go watch Jesus Christ weeping over Jerusalem in Luke and in Mark, in several of the Gospels. Here's Jesus, and he's been talking to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem has rejected the truth.

[00:19:09.690] - Speaker 1

At one point, he gets up and he begins to weep, and he says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if only this day you knew the things that pertain to your peace, but now they're hid from your eyes. How often I've wanted to take your children to myself like a hen takes the chicks under her wing. But now they're hidden from your eyes. And he says, Jerusalem, not one stone will be left on top of another one. Your enemies will come in and ravage you because you refused to see that God has visited you.

[00:19:42.810] - Speaker 1

Jerusalem. Jerusalem. Here you've got the essence of it. On the one hand, condemnation. You don't see Jesus being mealy mouthed about it.

[00:19:54.180] - Speaker 1

He says this is sin. This is refusal. This is rejection. This is stiff neck-ness. He doesn't talk about mistakes.

[00:20:02.690] - Speaker 1

He doesn't talk about unwise choices. I made a mistake. He doesn't talk like that. He says this is sin. But then on the other hand, he weeps.

[00:20:14.450] - Speaker 1

He says, what can I do? What could I do? You see, this is not the harshness of our old Western culture, and it's not the wimpiness of our modern Western culture. You don't have a god here, simply a fury or a god here of love, but a god of love and fury. Because this is a holy god.

[00:20:31.690] - Speaker 1

Holy love, holy wrath, not ill temper. And listen, because of that, you see this verse 18, not only says that on the person who the person who rejects Jesus Christ is condemned eventually. It doesn't say that. It says, whoever does not believe stands condemned. Already.

[00:20:54.050] - Speaker 1

Already.

[00:20:56.930] - Speaker 1

Verse 36 says, whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. This is very important. If God's temper was crankiness, if he was just irked at us, if his anger was like our anger, then he would just blow up every so often. A lot of people say, well, now, the wrath of God on sin, does that mean that if I cheat on my income tax April 15, that I'll break my leg on April 16? Is that what will happen?

[00:21:24.250] - Speaker 1

Is that God punishing me? No. You see, that's the cranky idea. As a parent, I know this. I can be cranky in the way in which I punish my children.

[00:21:35.630] - Speaker 1

My children have embarrassed me, if they've upset me, if they've destroyed my schedule and so on. I can get very angry. And what I can just do and what you can do is you can just haul off and do something just to hurt them. But if on the other hand, you're punishing them and you're opposing their evil out of a desire to really see the evil destroyed, instead of just being nasty, instead of nasty consequences, your punishment is natural consequences. So, you think it out.

[00:22:06.390] - Speaker 1

You say, my son here has got a tumor in him. It's a disease, it's lying, or it's something else like that. How do I deal with that? Do I just shrug and say, oh, hey, everything's fine. That's okay, kids.

[00:22:18.890] - Speaker 1

Boys will be boys? On the other hand, do I just slap them across the face? How dare you lie to me like that? Don't you see that one of those is a god of all wrath and one of those is a god of all love? And neither of those things is Biblical.

[00:22:32.870] - Speaker 1

Instead, I look at my son and I say, I'm going to give you natural consequences, son, because you abuse this toy, I'll take the toy away. Because you abuse this privilege, I have to take the privilege away. You've got to see that this thing will grow and grow, and unless you do something about it, it's going to destroy you. Natural consequences. And that's why the Bible continually says that the wrath of God is on you now.

[00:22:57.660] - Speaker 1

It's working itself out in your life now, if you disobey him, it remains on you. It says in Romans 1:18, the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness of men. Is, now, present. What that means is not that he's up there saying, I'm just slapping you across the face. See, instead it means his opposition, remember, his settled opposition to evil is working itself out in your life.

[00:23:23.250] - Speaker 1

He has set up the universe so that if you move against God's law, you move against yourself. He has set up the universe in that way. You can get away with your sins, but you can never get away from your sins. Here, look. See how he set it up.

[00:23:41.820] - Speaker 1

If you're dishonest, if you lie, does that mean tomorrow a brick is going to fall off of a building and hit you? Or what? Does it mean that if you're dishonest, you will start not being able to trust other people? If you're bitter, you'll get sick. If you're selfish, it'll destroy your relationship and your marriage.

[00:24:01.150] - Speaker 1

If there's graft and corruption in government, eventually the government will topple and all those fat jobs that you have eventually will be lost.

[00:24:10.510] - Speaker 1

Your sins. You can get away with your sins, but not ever from your sins because God has set it up. His wrath is working itself out. It's opposed. He's opposed to you and he's opposed to what you're doing.

[00:24:24.080] - Speaker 1

And as long as you disobey Him, his wrath remains on you. And it's one of the reasons why many things are going wrong in your life now; maybe. Friends, human laws sometimes can oppress because they can crush, because they sometimes reveal the, they actually simply are, the expressions of the vested interests of those in power. But God's law always expresses consummate wisdom.

[00:24:52.570] - Speaker 1

His laws are there not to break you, but to make you. That when you break them, you break yourself. Just like breaking the law of gravity. Nobody's going to give you a ticket for breaking the law of gravity. You'll break all your bones.

[00:25:04.930] - Speaker 1

Don't you see that? God's not going to sit down and say, oh, here's a law of gravity, and if you do that, I'm going to do something to you. It doesn't have to do anything like that to you. You break the law of God, you break yourself. You obey the law of God, and what happens is the opposition is removed from you.

[00:25:23.270] - Speaker 1

In other words, the law of God always is there so that as you obey, it harnesses your potential, it releases your potential. It shows you what you were built for. It unlocks the potential of your design. God's wrath is based on a love of truth and standards and a love of you and his creation. And that's why he gets angry.

[00:25:48.350] - Speaker 1

Last point and the most critical point. Listen, dear friends, the reason that many of you went to churches, which you might call conservative churches, legalistic churches, where all you ever heard of was a god who said no. And some of you went to other kinds of churches where you never heard about hell or condemnation. And all you ever heard about was a very warm, sweet, loving god who never said no. And the reason for that, the reason is some of you are self-indulged, pampered children and you feel like orphans, and you are.

[00:26:23.530] - Speaker 1

And the reason some of you feel like abused children and you are is not because of God, but because of the false god that was put up in front of you. So, you have to be to be a, to be an indulged child. A spoiled child can screw you up just as bad as being an abused child. The real god can only be understood if you understand the cross. Because on the cross, the wrath of God and the love of God meet and are satisfied.

[00:26:51.490] - Speaker 1

You see, on the one hand, here's God. If he's really a god of fury and a god of love, then he's sitting here and he's saying, how in the world can I pour out my wrath against the sin, the cancerous tumors that are growing throughout my creation and destroying it? But how can I do that without destroying everybody who's got a tumor? How do I do that? And the answer is verse 16.

[00:27:17.610] - Speaker 1

He gave his son, for God so loved the whole world that he gave us his son. Because his son stands in as a substitute, he bears the blame. Another way to put it is God's wrath is satisfied because on the cross, his wrath is poured out. And all of the punishment that sin is supposed to get, all of the punishment that sin deserves is poured out. But at the same time, on the cross, his love is satisfied.

[00:27:44.300] - Speaker 1

Because if we believe in Him, then God can take us into his world, into his family, into his life, because it's all been paid for. Do you see that? In other words, think of God's wrath on sin as radiation, lethal radiation that's coming on out there. But Jesus Christ is sort of like a covering. It's like that thing that the X ray technician puts over all the rest of your body, except the part that's supposed to get the radiation.

[00:28:13.070] - Speaker 1

And if you come in under his covering, your tumor is dealt with, your sin is dealt with, but you are not devastated. John Stott, in one of his books, puts it just perfectly like this, listen. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be. God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. That's the cross.

[00:28:36.230] - Speaker 1

Man claims prerogatives that belong to God only, and God accepts penalties which belong to man only. The cross means this, if you believe in Jesus, there is no wrath left for you. It's all fallen into his heart. On the cross, both the love and the standards of God are satisfied. On the cross, both the love and the fury of God shines.

[00:29:03.390] - Speaker 1

They perfectly brilliantly, coincide and shine forth. Whenever Paul thinks about this sort of thing, when he thinks of the wisdom, he just goes berserk. He breaks into doxologies, he messes up paragraphs. English teachers always have hated him because he's going along and suddenly, he thinks about it. Isn't it amazing, he says, how wise it is of God that both sin can be punished and sinners can be

[00:29:25.780] - Speaker 1

saved. And he breaks in. Oh, he says, oh, the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, how inscrutable his ways. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

[00:29:41.850] - Speaker 1

And if you understand that, if you understand that, don't you see how what a big difference that makes? Verse 18 says, if you understand how the cross, how God giving his only Son, took all God's wrath, so there's no more left for you. If you understand that, then you now know. It says in the first half of verse 18, and this is the way every Christian ought to live. It says, therefore, there is no condemnation.

[00:30:07.190] - Speaker 1

Whoever believes in Him is not condemned. Romans 8:1 says, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And a Christian is someone who lives a no condemnation life. Nothing can charge you. Your record is clean.

[00:30:24.070] - Speaker 1

Now. Do you know what that means? The Bible calls it peace with God. Romans 5:1 says, now that we're justified by faith, we have peace with God. That's not the same thing as 'peace of God'.

[00:30:35.160] - Speaker 1

The peace of God is a feeling. It's a wonderful feeling. It's great to feel the peace of God, but we're talking about peace with God. This is an objective thing. This means the hostilities are gone.

[00:30:46.430] - Speaker 1

This means because of what Jesus Christ did, God is for you. His wrath and his love blaze for you and not against you. He is your ally, he's your protector, he's your friend. He is your Father. Do you believe that?

[00:31:00.130] - Speaker 1

Do you understand that you're under no condemnation? Now let me give you a couple of tests to see whether you do. See, if you don't understand how the wrath and love of God are satisfied on the cross, you will fall down into one side or the other. You will either be living a life in which God is all loving and never says no, it indulged, permissive, child, or else you're going to fall down on the other side and always feel condemned. So, this is for you types over here.

[00:31:27.450] - Speaker 1

Do you understand what it means to live no condemnation living? A person who understands the truth we're talking about. For example, here's one test, when you see more of your sin, instead of it driving away from God, it drives you closer.

[00:31:43.070] - Speaker 1

There's a lot of people who say, oh, I'm a Christian. I believe that I'm saved by faith and grace, not by any of my works. And yet, whenever some incident occurs that makes you see I'm more selfish than I thought, I have less self-control than I thought, I'm more messed up than I thought, does it make you not want to go near God? Does it make you not even want to come to church? Does it make you feel far from God?

[00:32:04.470] - Speaker 1

You feel like, I can't even approach Him. Then that shows that you may intellectually believe in the cross but you don't get it yet. Because the more you see your sin, a person who understands the truth we're talking about feels closer to God. The more you see your sin, the more you see your sin,

[00:32:19.550] - Speaker 1

you say, Lord, I know that you love me and accept me and I didn't know I was this wicked. And so, your love is greater than I thought. Your mercy is more precious than I thought.

[00:32:29.630] - Speaker 1

If you understand that you're not condemned, then the revelation, the discovery of new depths of weakness, fault and sin in your life drives you closer to Him, not further away. I'll give you another test. People who understand there's no condemnation live without a fear of judgment. That means they're not afraid of death.

[00:32:50.400] - Speaker 1

That means they're not afraid of the future. That means they're not afraid of what other people think about them. There's a certain confidence that grows. You see, you're not afraid of meeting God. You're not worried about whether God's really for you or not.

[00:33:04.650] - Speaker 1

That's why God is constantly saying, if God is for us, who can be against us? Paul knows plenty of people can be against you. But what he's saying? He's not saying nobody can be against us. He says, if God is for us, who the heck are they?

[00:33:16.830] - Speaker 1

What possible problem can they really afford to us? How bad can they be? I've got a God who's for me, so I'm not afraid of the future because I know he's in charge of it and he's for me. I'm not afraid of death because I know he loves me. It's like that poem, that poem, that old poem in which a Christian is talking with death and death says,

“Thou shalt die, these arms shall crush thee.”

[00:33:43.100] - Speaker 1

And Christian turns to death and says,

“Spare not, do thy worst, and I shall only be better than before

Thou so much worse that thou shalt be no more”

Go ahead, do your worst, death. Kill me. And all you'll do is make me better.

[00:33:58.510] - Speaker 1

And you'll destroy yourself because all of sin and death was crucified and nailed to the cross with my Savior. And here's another way you can tell whether or not you have this no condemnation living. Not only does the revelation of your sin doesn't ~~push you toward God~~, push you away from God, but pushes you toward God, you have less and less of a fear of judgment. You have a triumphant courage in life.

[00:34:23.910] - Speaker 1

But lastly, you know how to deal with your conscience. Listen, when you're walking down the street and the voice comes to you and it says look at you. Look at your heart. Look at the things that you've done. And you expect people to love you, you call yourself a Christian.

[00:34:46.410] - Speaker 1

Look at you. How do you deal with it? Well, now, a person who doesn't understand the cross and how the wrath and love of God have come together on the cross and been satisfied. You know what you have to do? You have to say, "Well, I had a bad day."

[00:35:00.270] - Speaker 1

Or you had to say, "but I was abused and neglected as a child. See? So, I have to act like this." Or you have to get out from under it. You have to say, "I'm not as guilty."

[00:35:10.010] - Speaker 1

"I'm not guilty." Or you have to say, "But I'm much better than everybody else in my office. Everybody else in my family screwed up and I'm really the best of all of them." Or maybe you just drink so you don't have to think about it. Or maybe you go read a book that tells you that you shouldn't feel guilty for anything.

[00:35:27.060] - Speaker 1

How does a Christian deal with your conscience? You know what you do? You turn around and you say, "Even if I hadn't done this thing I'm feeling guilty about, that wouldn't make me acceptable. Jesus has done it. Jesus is my record."

[00:35:42.320] - Speaker 1

Jesus is my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification and my redemption." You see? In other words, the voice comes and says, what's the voice come and say? It says, you wretch, be gone. Retreat in shame.

[00:35:58.450] - Speaker 1

And Jesus says, my love, come here. I bore the blame. You must sit down and taste my meat. And I did sit and eat. Jesus says, my meat is peace.

[00:36:15.950] - Speaker 1

My meat is acceptance. You must sit down and take it. Say the voice. The voice of your conscience will say, "go away, you wretch. Go retreat in shame."

[00:36:24.550] - Speaker 1

Jesus says, 'Come here, my love. I bore the blame.' Look, friends, do you understand there's no condemnation living? Do you understand what happened on the cross? You are doomed unless you believe the Gospel.

[00:36:39.870] - Speaker 1

Unless you believe that you are more wicked and more evil than you ever dared believe. But you're more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope because God's wrath and his love have come together and kissed on the cross and both been satisfied. So, you understand that you are doomed to either have a permissive god or a harsh god. And you know who you are, don't you? Some of you are in this boat.

[00:37:02.170] - Speaker 1

You have been raised with an enlightened view of God that never says no to you. And therefore you don't have a god at all, you've got a secretary, you have an assistant. You have somebody to help you on the road to self-actualization. And you are like a child.

[00:37:15.630] - Speaker 1

Children are always saying, no limits, no rules, no standards. I have my needs. The child says, I have my desires. I have my feelings. I will die if you don't let me sleep over at somebody's house tonight.

[00:37:30.670] - Speaker 1

And a parent who says, Fine, go ahead. If that child ever gets liberated from that, if that child really gets out from under those limits, that child experiences a kind of an emotional vertigo the rest of his life. He doesn't know which end is up. He doesn't feel there's anything to the right or the left. His parents have not guided him or confronted him or really loved him.

[00:37:50.130] - Speaker 1

All that love and no confrontation and no standards isn't love, it's sentiment. And there's plenty of people who have got a god like that, a god who never tells them no. You won't believe in a god who tells you no. You won't believe in a god who condemns.

[00:38:03.730] - Speaker 1

You won't believe in a god who says, this is a sin. Don't do it, there's consequences if you do. If you don't believe in a god like that, you'll be like those children who are raised with parents like that. They're messed up.

[00:38:15.680] - Speaker 1

They feel like orphans. And you know what they are. You feel like an orphan, and maybe it's because you are. But on the other hand, if you've got a god, nothing but wrath, nothing but laws, no understanding of grace, no understanding of what happened on the cross, you're a driven person, and it's never enough. You try so hard to be moral.

[00:38:33.900] - Speaker 1

You tried it so hard to be good, and you always feel so unworthy.

[00:38:39.430] - Speaker 1

The Bible says the wicked flee when no man pursues. You're always looking over your shoulder. You always think somebody's out to get me. I'm so unworthy. You feel like too little butter spread over too much bread.

[00:38:57.550] - Speaker 1

Never enough! Tasteless. Jesus, listen. You're never, out of fear ever going to be able to become a loving person. It doesn't matter how scared you are that God's going to get you. If that's your motivation, you will find you'll never become the person you want to be.

[00:39:18.470] - Speaker 1

You'll never become like Christ. You'll never grow in positive character. You can repress some of your feelings, you can avoid certain kinds of temptations, but love is invoked by love. Fear cannot awaken love. Jesus Christ.

[00:39:35.270] - Speaker 1

Listen. Paul says the love of Christ constrains us. You can be like Paul, who was always looking at Jesus under the weight of the wrath of God, and it melted his heart like butter, so that he was so full of grateful

joy that he wasn't afraid of anything. And you can be like that too. And if there's anybody here who hasn't made this transaction, if you have never really trusted in Christ in the way we're talking about, I want you to realize the opposition of God is working in your life, but he sends his anger into your life to drive you into the arms of his love.

[00:40:09.490] - Speaker 1

So go or come, the voice says, "be gone, you wretch. Retreat in shame." Jesus says, "come here, my love. I bore the blame." Let's pray.

[00:40:28.810] - Speaker 1

Father, as we go to Your table now, all we ask is that you would help us to see both the seriousness with which you take sin. Why would you have sent your son to be broken unless sin was a capital offense? We would not be molded either by the old culture or the new. We would not be self-indulged, indulgent and indulged children or abused children. We would not be enslaved to false gods that have been put over us and miss you the true God, the one under whose heart and mind and hand we can grow and blossom.

[00:41:15.830] - Speaker 1

We thank you for the Gospel. Take us to the cross now. Help us to relive it. Help us to understand what your son did for us so that we can be just as full of holiness and just as full of joy. Just as full of serious repentance over sin and just as full of the grateful joy of knowing we belong to you as Paul, as all the great saints were.

[00:41:39.980] - Speaker 1

Make us like them. Make us like your son. It's in his name we pray. Amen.