

Romans 8 :1 - Not Condemned – 6 Nov 2011

By the grace of God, we have journeyed these months since February through the book of Romans and we come now to somewhat the mid-point of the book of Romans ~ Romans chapter 8.

Many theologians believe that this is the peak of the mountain ranges. It is the crown jewel in the book of Romans. It is a glorious chapter and we will start to explore it in the weeks that are to come. But in Romans chapter 8, I want to teach or share with you, first of all, the subject of guilt. Not a very nice subject, I think, to human hearts but a necessary subject for our consideration. We are going to look at the subject of guilt.

There was a man who stood trial for murder. He was accused of killing another man. And as he stood trial, the evidences were all stacked up against him. The only thing in his favour is that till now, nobody has found the body of the deceased. So nobody really knows whether the man is dead or alive. But, nevertheless, he stood trial for a case of supposed murder. His lawyer, the defense lawyer, knew that this is a difficult case to fight. And, as the trial went on, he knew that it was all stacked up against him and, in the last moment, the last address he could, he said to the jury and to the people gathered. He says, 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he looks down at his watch and looks up again, 'in about exactly a minute's time, the man who is said to be dead would open that door at the back of this room and walk right in.' Now everybody, on hearing those words, turned their eyes to the gate or to the door. Their eyes were fastened to the door. For the entire minute, everyone was waiting with eager anticipation: 'will the supposed dead man walks in?'

One minute's up. And the door didn't budge a single bit. No sound. No movement. No one came in. Rumbblings began to start among the people and among the jury. And the defense lawyer, now with a smug look on his face, says 'you see, you have reasonable doubt as to whether the man is dead or alive. And therefore you cannot, you cannot sentence my client guilty because there is reasonable doubt.' So everybody sort of went 'Ahhh..'. They felt cheated but they couldn't argue against this statement, isn't it?

The jury now retreated to their rooms for a time of deliberation. Two minutes. Just a couple of minutes was what it took them. They came out again. The judge now asked the jury 'what say you?' The representative of the jury stood up and says, 'Your Honour, we find the defendant guilty as charged.' The lawyer was bamboozled. Guilty? Didn't I just prove to you that there is reasonable doubt? How can you

sentence him guilty? Didn't all of you look at the door and fully expected a man to walk in? The jury representative says, 'We all looked at the door, yes, but we realized that your client didn't.' (Laughter). Guilty as charged.

Well, we are going to look at the subject of guilt today. And guilt is a complex problem, you realize that? Psychologists say that guilt is the most difficult problem in the whole of psychological therapy. It's a deep psychological problem but I think guilt is more than a psychological problem. It is a spiritual problem. You see, guilt began the day Adam and Eve sinned against God. And they began to hide themselves because they were guilty.

And ever since then, man has tried to reach God, tried to reconcile with God. And that's what we call religion. Religion is man's attempt at trying to reach God, reconcile with God to resolve the problem of guilt in our lives. According to the bible, however, all religions fail. No man can reconcile with God on his own. No man can resolve the problem of guilt on his own. The problem of sin, the problem of guilt can only find its solution in one person - the Lord Jesus Christ - because it is only Jesus who can die and pay for our sins. It is only Jesus who can deliver us from our guilt.

But today, I am speaking to Christians. If you are here today and you are a child of God and you are a believer of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am speaking to you. In fact, the problem of guilt is very much your problem as well. I believe there are many Christians today, right here right now, who is living their lives under a burden and load of guilt. You know what I mean? You feel guilty about yourself. You feel guilty about your life because you have failed the Lord so many times. You know you shouldn't have done that but you did. You know you shouldn't have sinned in that area but you sinned in that area, nonetheless. You know you shouldn't have lied. You know you shouldn't have shouted at your wife. You know you shouldn't have indulged in that pornographic scene on the internet. You know you shouldn't have done that. And you've just blown it. And now you feel bad about yourself. And you think, and you feel, like God loves you less.

In fact, you feel that God now hates you. You feel condemned. You are gripped by fear and despair and guilt. You feel you will never make it. You hear a voice saying to you 'you know, Jason, you will never make it. You've just failed the Lord again. This is the umpteenth time you have committed this sin. God is angry with you. God doesn't love you.' And you hear these voices in your life. You walk around your Christian life with a burden of guilt on your shoulders. Maybe you are like that today and that's why it is so important for us to come to the scriptures. It is

so important for us to appreciate the truth, the comfort you can derive from the word of God.

Romans 8 is a glorious chapter because it opens with a glorious declaration. In verse 1, Paul says,

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

When you are in despair, when you are in fear and you are overwhelmed with guilt, the words of the Holy Spirit, through apostle Paul, rings so sweetly in our ears:

'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'

There is a pastor well-known today. He is 80 plus years old, I think and living in the States. Many of you will know who he is if I mention his name. He had this to say about Romans 8:1 and I read this to you : 'I think that this particular verse has meant more to me than almost any other passage of scripture because I had lived so many years of my Christian life in constant condemnation because though my spirit was indeed willing, my flesh was weak. Week after week, I would promise God that I was going to do better next week while apologising and repenting for my failure for the past week. God, next week I promise I will read the bible every day. I will pray every day. God, I am going to do better. I was always feeling guilty because I was always breaking my vow before God. I was not doing those things that I promised God I would do. I was constantly feeling condemnation but there is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus.' He says this: 'I think that this particular verse has meant more to me than almost any other passage of scripture.'

I know many of you today live under that condemnation mode. Maybe it's because of the background of the churches we come from ~ legalism. So all about the set of 'dos' and 'don'ts'. And when we don't meet up to those standards and when we don't meet up to those sets of 'dos' and 'don'ts', we feel condemned and God doesn't love us and we are stricken with guilt.

But there is therefore now no condemnation. It's a great verse. It's a great thought. O yes, the bible has a lot of verses about condemnation. It does. I am not here to sweeten things up for you. No. My job is not to make things easy and nice. I am here to preach the truth and the bible does tell us that God does condemn man in his sins. There's no doubt about it.

Let me just show to you two verses. It says here in Romans 1:18 that there is "the wrath of God that is revealed from the heavens against all unrighteousness...." . God

does get angry with our sins. In fact, the wrath of God, I think, is as intense as the love of God. It's only when we understand the wrath of God then can we appreciate the love of God.

But make no mistakes about it. The bible does teach us a lot about how God is angry with our sins and how God will condemn man who remains in their sins, who remain in their unbelief. In fact, I think, one of the first things God said in the Garden of Eden is this "Thou shall not eat of the fruit thereof. For in the day thou shall eat of it, you shall surely die". God means business. The idea of a santa claus is so erroneous. God is no santa claus. God is not a grumpy, indulgent old man sitting up there. He is the God of the heavens who is holy and righteous and that's the wrath of God poured out against sin and against sinful man. The bible tells us

"But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" ~ Romans 2:5

So, let's be clear. There is condemnation. Plenty of it found in the bible. God does condemn sinful men who remain in unbelief and in their sins. But all that turned around when Jesus came isn't it? The bible tells us Jesus, in His very own words, in John 5:24,

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, he that heareth my words and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life."

When we are in Jesus Christ, there is no condemnation. But when you are outside of Jesus Christ, when you are out of Christ, you face condemnation. So in the light of such scary, thunderous fury of the Lord, Romans 8:1 is a sweet ringing tone to our ears:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

You are forever loved. Forever accepted in Christ. You are eternally pardoned. Your sins are forgiven and God will not bring it against you anymore. Do you know how absolute it is? It is as absolute as God is absolute. It's all in Christ, you see.

I want you to turn your bibles ~I did not put them up on the screen~ to Romans 8 and verse 33 onwards. I mean, these are words that you need to read constantly. Remind yourselves of what God says because in times when you go through

difficulties, when you are discouraged, when you feel you have failed the Lord, you got to go to the truth. You got to go and find out what God is saying about you. He says in Romans 8:33 ~ great text this is, glorious song of praise almost:

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

He is saying 'who can condemn you if God has declared you righteous.' Wow. In verse 34,

"Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

He goes on to verse 35,

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Can all these things ever separate us from the eternal love of God? No. Look at verses 37-39:

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, (nothing at all) shall be able to separate us from the love of God, (the strong love of God) which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nothing. Eternally loved. Forever forgiven. Perpetually pardoned. This is your position in Christ. This is what Paul is saying in Rom 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation'. Wow. You say what kind of condemnation. What is condemnation? Well, let's be exact. Let's be precise because the bible is precise. The word condemnation in the Greek is the word called 'Katakrima'. It's a specific word. This refers to the sentencing and to the punishment.

So, two parts to it. First of all, the pronouncement that they are guilty. And number 2, the punishment or the penalty that your guilt deserves. Or your crime deserves. So it's a bigger word that includes both the sentencing and the punishment. Now this is a word that is used rarely in scriptures. Just three times and they all happen in the book of Romans. But in the Greek, there's another word that is used for judgment or condemnation. And that is the word 'Katakrino'. It's a different word. And that word

refers only to the sentencing. It doesn't deal with the judge. It doesn't deal with the punishment or the penalty. So Paul is precise. He says, 'if you are in Christ Jesus, there is no katakrima.' There is no sentencing that you are guilty. God doesn't look at you as guilty. And you will not be punished for your sins.

Hold your horses if you are confused. I will explain it in due time but let's be understanding the word 'katakrima'. There is no sentencing and there will be no punishment for your sins. Wah, some Christians are getting uneasy already. No punishment hah, Pastor? Yes, no punishment. But I'll tell you a little bit more in a while. So that's what scripture is saying. If you are in Christ, no more guilty, no more punishment. And for the absoluteness of this, Paul uses a word that is unique to represent the word 'no'.

The second word you need to look at is the word 'no' ~ Oudeis. This 'no' is not a simple 'no'. It's a strong 'no'. There's a very strong, negative tone to it. In other words, it means no, not at all, never. So if you read this verse, it says there will be never, no, not at all, any sentencing nor punishment for your sins to those who are in Christ Jesus. Very, very absolute. And if you want to know how absolute it is, this word 'oudeis' is placed as the first word in this sentence. First word. To the Greeks and to the scholars, when you want to emphasise a point, you take the word and put it right up front. So if you read this word in the Greek, it is 'Oudeis ara nun Katarima tois en Christo lesou'. No. That is the first thing you need to understand. No, never, not at all will there be any sentencing or punishment for your sins to those who are in Christ Jesus. Absolute.

Let this thought soak in for a while because this is what man often thinks. Man often looks at God as if He is the Man of Gotcha. You know what the God of Gotcha is. I gotcha. Ha, ha. You sinned. I gotcha. You know, we look at God as if He is like inspecting our lives. At any moment, we say, He is going to whack us like a fly. Have you played this game before: 'Whack-a-mole'? You go to arcades, amusement parks and children there love to play whack-a-mole. When the mole comes up, 'piak, piak'. And you whack it. I am really bad at this. And sometimes we think God is really good at whack-a-mole. Or all He specialises is to look at Christians when he sins, whack him. Punish him. 'Tekan' him (Tekan is the Malay word for 'to punish'). (Laughter). Whack-a-mole God. God of the Gotcha, but no.

The bible tells me there is never, no, not at all any condemnation, any sentencing, any punishment to those who are in Christ Jesus. And you know what? He is not capricious. God is not fickle. God is not changing. God is not like has mood swings.

Oh sometimes He loves me so He doesn't whack me. But sometimes He is not happy with me, He whacks me. I do not know how to relate to a God like that because I am not sure whether He loves me or not. No, God loves us eternally, in Christ Jesus. You are pardoned forever. You are forgiven for the rest of eternity. No, never, not at all any condemnation.

Martin Lloyd Jones, a preacher who has just gone on to be with the Lord ~ said to be preacher par excellence ~ had this to say about this verse. 'There are many who misunderstand this. They seem to think of the Christian as a man, who, if he confesses his sin and asks for forgiveness, is forgiven. At that moment, he is not under condemnation. But then, if he should sin again, he is back once more under condemnation. Then he repents and confesses his sin again and asks for pardon and he is cleansed once more. So, to them, the Christian is a man who is constantly passing from one state to the other, back and forth, condemned, not condemned.' Now that, according to the apostle, is a wholly mistaken notion and a complete failure to understand the position. The Christian is a man who can never be condemned. He can never come into a state of condemnation again. No condemnation. The apostle is not talking about his experience but about his position, his standing, and his state. He's in a position in which being already justified; he can never again come under condemnation. That is the meaning of this word 'no'. It means never. So, think about this. Paul is saying 'There is, therefore, now NO CONDEMNATION.'

This is where, I think, clarification needs to come in. Some of us think 'wah very good, ah, like that. No condemnation, hah? Then I can do whatever I want, sin however I wish and it's ok because I will not be condemned.' Now let's be clear about scriptural teaching. Let me, if there is such a word, de-confuse. Let me clarify the apparent confusion in our minds. When God says there is no condemnation, it doesn't mean that there is no more sin, alright? It doesn't mean, first of all, that there is no conflict. When I preached the message on 'Struggle within', there are some who are concerned because they say 'how can we still be struggling with sin when God says that we are no more condemned?' The scripture is very clear, very precise. God uses the word 'katakrima'. There is no judgment, there is no punishment. But it doesn't mean that there is no conflict.

In fact, I think this verse, Rom 8:1 comes even more precious and relevant to us when we understand Rom 7. Rom 7 tells us of a titanic struggle within every Christian ~ the new nature vs the old flesh in us. And we sin. And, at times, we are weak, we fall. We fail, we make mistakes. But even as we make such sins and

mistakes in our lives, you know what; the bible says there is no condemnation to you ~ none. Yes, you are struggling. Yes, you fail. And, yes, you say, 'Lord, this is the three hundred and seventy-fourth time.' But the message of heaven says 'no condemnation, son'. It is when the battle is hottest that this verse comes forth alive greatest. I think that's why Paul says it again in Romans 8, verse 1 because, I think, the issue could have been settled in Rom 5 where God says "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." We have eirene with God. We are one with God. There is no more condemnation. Actually already stated in Rom 5:1. But he's got to say it again because Christians struggle with sin and when they fail, they feel condemned. And Paul has to remind them of scriptural teaching that there is no condemnation. You may fall, you may sin. You have mistakes in your life, but God our Heavenly Father says 'not condemned'. Not seen to be guilty in your position. Not going to be punished judicially for your sins.

So, number 1: No, it doesn't mean there is no conflict. There will still be. And in the light of such conflict, the release from condemnation is especially sweet. But number 2, when God says there is no condemnation, it doesn't mean there is 'no correction'. Ah, this is where clarity of thinking has to come. It doesn't mean today that God allows us to sin and we do whatever we want and He's not going to deal with our lives. No, He will. He will. But He doesn't do it because He is an angry judge. He does it because He is a loving Father. It's not punishment. It's chastisement. It's different. The motivation and the purpose of it is totally opposite. Punishment is to pour out His wrath that your sins deserve. Chastisement is about the love of God to turn you from the destructiveness of sin. That's the difference, you see. And there are churches, there are people, there are teachers today, who say, 'Oh, there's no condemnation so we can go and sin whatever you want and God is not going to change or correct you.' Nonsense. God will. In fact, if He doesn't do that, He doesn't love you at all. Which parent here does not discipline your child? If you don't do it, I say you are a lousy parent. Really. Lousy. Because you don't love your child.

You look with me in Hebrews 12, if you will. Hebrews 12 and this is a great text because we often confuse hurt and harm. Now, I hurt my son regularly. I do. My wife and I, we hurt our son regularly. We whack his backside. We cane him and he cries buckets. And our hearts feel the pain. Can I stop caning you? Cannot. I've got to cane you because I love you. Now I hurt my son but I never intend to harm my son. He needs to learn because I love him. And God needs to hurt us in order to spare us from the harm of sin, you see. In Hebrews 12, he says here 'you have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children.' My son. My son. Not my

enemy. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. God is going to chasten you but He chastens you as a father to a son. He says again in verse 6:

"For whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth."

When the bible says no condemnation, does it mean no correction? No. You're not condemned, but you will be corrected because He loves you and that correction can be very strong. The word that is used later on in Hebrews 12:6 is the word 'scourged'. You know what scourge is? Flog. 'Piak'. God can use scourging in your life but He is not condemning you, you see. That's the difference. He is correcting you, not condemning you. He doesn't hate you. He loves you. You got to get that distinction clear. If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. Hey, realize it's about dealing with you as a son. For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if you are without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye, in the words in King James, 'bastards' which means illegitimate children and not sons. Approve of your sonship, approve of your relationship with God, is the chastening hand of God. But the motivation for those pains in your life is not punishment. It's correction.

Frankly, if God really punishes us for our sins, I don't think we can even stand because I think the punishment our sins deserve is gigantic. I think it's like ten thousand billion dollars kind of numbers. Cannot be numbered. Why? Because the sin is not against an ordinary man. The sin is against an infinite God. And if we are really to pay the penalty, we would not even stand. So when God deals with us, He is not punishing us for our sins. The sins of the world will be punished forever and ever and ever in the Lake of Fire. But when God deals with us, He deals with us as children, as His child. And therefore, no condemnation but there is correction.

Thirdly, to clarify the myth or to demystify this whole understanding, no condemnation also doesn't mean that there is no crisis. Ah, you say, so good that there is no condemnation so my life will be a bed of roses. No, not at all. You see, again this dilemma arises because we confuse hurt and harm. Crises are painful, let's face it. When you lose a child, when you are stricken with an incurable disease, when you just lost your job, when ministry collapses and fail. Those experiences are painful. They hurt but they are not intended to harm you. It's not because God is angry with you. It's not because God wants to 'tekan' you or 'whack' you.

There will be crises. Romans 5 tell us we will rejoice in tribulation, in the crushing experiences of life. God says those are good for you. Count it all joy when you fall into

diverse testings or temptations because God is moulding, shaping, growing your character. So, again, churches take a verse like Romans 8:1 and they say well, now that you are a Christian, no more sins. Perfectionism. Lie. They tell you, number 2, God is not going to deal with your sins. No chastisement anymore. No bad things will happen to your life. Again, lie. Because they confuse hurt and harm. And there are people who say when you are in Christ, no condemnation means there will never be a crisis or trial that God gives. Again, nonsense. It doesn't square up the scripture, you see.

Finally, no condemnation also doesn't mean there is no consequences to your sin. After the first service, one of our members asked me 'Pastor, what did you mean by that. You didn't say a lot. So let me say more. (Laughter). No consequences is some thinking people have because God doesn't condemn us so I can sin whatever I want and there will be no consequences. No. The bible tells us that when we sin, we will reap its natural consequences. We will. I mean, in Galatians 6:7,

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. If it's sowed to the flesh, he will of the flesh reap corruption, (decay, dying).

Romans 6:23,

"For the wages of sin is death."

The word 'wages' there is the word 'obsonair'. It's not the salary you collect at the end of the month or the end of the year. It's a daily ration that is meted out to you so that you can carry on being a soldier. And when you sin, sin pays you something right there, right then. It pays you obsonair which is death. Something in you dies. The consequence of sin is something in your soul dies a little every time you sin. The principle of sowing and reaping is not violated when God says there is no condemnation, you see. If you choose to visit prostitutes and you contract STD, God is not going to remove it for you. If you are in an adulterous relationship and your family breaks up, that's a natural consequence of sin. For it doesn't mean that God doesn't love you, alright? It doesn't mean God doesn't love you. His love is like the sun still shining bright. But you have chosen, you have chosen, to be under the shelter away from the sun of His love. He still loves you but you have made the wrong choice and, for that, you are going to suffer the consequences of your sin.

However, the statement stands true: No condemnation. You are still loved. How loved? How loved even when you sin. How loved are you loved when you are in sin. The same love God has for His Son ~ not one iota less. Because it's not about you. It's

about you in Christ, you see. So you got to get it clear. No condemnation. But it doesn't mean any of these 4 things.

Who then is not condemned? Well, there's only one condition. No condemnation is not for the whole world, alright? God does not teach universalism. In other words, the bible doesn't say, 'Oh, God is so loving; God is so kind, God is so good. So everybody in this whole wide world, whether they believe in Jesus or not, will not be condemned. No. You will be condemned if you are out of Christ. The bible tells us the love of God is in Christ Jesus. So you got to be in Christ. Again this doesn't mean you need to be a super Christian or Mr Holy Man. No, everyone in Christ Jesus stands forgiven, pardoned, loved, accepted. That's what it is. That's how much he loves you. Not condemned.

This is a beautiful picture (picture shown on the screen). This is a picture of Noah's ark, isn't it? You know the phrase 'in Christ Jesus' is a popular phrase for Paul? He uses it no less than 164 times in his epistles. And what it means is the security and the safety we have in Jesus. And I think there's a beautiful picture in the Old Testament about Noah's ark. The whole world was under the judgment of God. I mean, the whole world was submerged in the flood of judgment. But, for those who are in the ark, they are safe. They are secure. There will be winds, there will be storms, there will be lightning, there will be thunder but they are safe in the ark. And they will not be condemned. They are not punished. And that's how it is for you in Jesus Christ. You are perfectly secure. Why? Because Jesus bore the wrath that your sins deserve. He was completely punished. He was completely your saviour. He said 'It is finished'. And God doesn't do double jeopardy. He doesn't punish His Son for your sins and then comes to you and punish you again. And because it is all punished, it is all appeased on the cross; there is none that will be on you. You are perfectly secure in Jesus.

You will not be condemned. God will not look at you and say you are guilty again. No. It is all taken by Jesus. On the other hand, we also realize this is not only perfect security, it is also everlasting security. I mean, you are always going to be secure. Always. If you are truly in Christ, you will always be secure. Like I said, God is not capricious. He is not fickle. He doesn't look at you one day and loves you, and another day, He hates you. So some day He 'whacks' you and some day He 'sayangs' you. ('Sayang' means 'to love' in Malay). It's all from the heart of God. He is always for you. Prior to coming to Christ, He is against you. You are enemy. But in Christ, He is always for you. You know how wonderful that is? He's always for you. His thoughts for you are thoughts of love and peace. He is not going to incur that

sentence or that punishment that is due for your sins. When you go through a crisis of life, you don't have to wonder 'God, do you love me?' He loves you. When you fail, and you sin against God, you don't have to wonder 'God, do you still love me?'. He loves you in Jesus Christ. You see, that's a security you must have to revel, to rejoice, to drink in the amazing love of God.

My son sometimes tells or asks us, 'Mummy, Daddy, do you love me?' He asks quite a few times you know. And my wife says he is very insecure. I don't know why. We constantly tell him, Shawn, we love you, even after we discipline him, we say, 'we love you'. But I guess Shawn is just a representation of all of us. We wonder 'God, do you love me?' Romans 8:1 sounds out, Romans 8:33-39 sounds out: 'I love you in Jesus Christ. I'll never stop loving you in Jesus Christ. I'll never stop loving you and I'll never love you less, even when you sin. It is not that there is now therefore less condemnation. There is therefore now no condemnation. I've just been on Facebook for one week. Newbie in the Facebook world, and just an advertisement ~ if you are on Facebook, visit me, my page at pastorjasonlim, and if it serves you, then put a 'like' to it to support, alright? (Laughter).

So I'm on Facebook for the very first time. And I explored the Facebook world for a while. I realize there are a lot of dodgy things, not so good things, even from our own people and sometimes that grieves our hearts. But there are a lot of good things as well, for example, I saw this post by one of our members. I think he must have read it somewhere or got it from somewhere. He says, 'I can't brag about my love for God because I fail him daily. But I can brag about His love for me because it NEVER FAILS.' God's love is not like ours. It's strong, unending and unchangeable because it is in Christ Jesus. God loves me all the time. All the time, if I am in Jesus Christ. Qualifying, you must truly be in Jesus Christ. And if you are, His love is unending.

I saw another post. It goes like this: 'God does not love us because we're good. But because God loves us, God makes us good ~ C.S. Lewis. Great guy. But another Gospeliter in our church sort of modified it and I think it's good. It says this: 'God does not love us because we are good (same phrase) but God loves us because HE is good.' It's not because we are good. You are no good, ok? I am no good. We are no gooders. I mean, what is of worth in this life? The only worth in this life is everything that comes from God, that's all. In and of myself, I am nothing. Why would God love me? Anything worth His love? The only thing that is worth His love is not me but because of Jesus. He loves me because He is good to place me in Jesus Christ.

My friends, you can be secure in this love. Or you may be having a marital problem today. You may be having a tough time at work. Your son is sick, your daughters are rebellious. You are going through tough times. And, like many of us, you cry out 'God, do you still love me? Are you punishing me? Is it because you are angry with me?' There is no condemnation. Yes, God will correct you if you have gone astray but He is not doing it because He hates you. He has not loved you a single bit less. Be comforted in His love.

There's a young girl in her room upstairs. And it was raining cats and dogs. It was stormy. It was thundery. There was loud thunder and bright flashes of lightning. And her father was concerned for her so he rushed upstairs. When he hears the thunder and he sees the lightning, he rushes upstairs to see how his four-year-old daughter would be. And when he got up, he saw his daughter spread-eagled, plastered herself onto the window pane. The window is there and she really plastered herself on the window pane. And the father asked 'Dear, what are you doing? It's flashing lightning and roaring thunder. What are you doing?' The four-year-old girl said to the daddy with a smile, 'Daddy, I think God wants to take a picture of me.' (Laughter).

Wow. When you go through the thundery storms of life, would you have the inner security founded on the Word of God, founded in the love of Jesus to say, "God still loves me and He wants to take a picture of me.' He loves me with a crazy kind of love. He loves me with an out-of-this-world kind of love. He loves me so strongly.

My friends, I think that as Christians, we need to live our lives based on what He says about us. We need to live our Christian lives based on what He has first done for us. The bible says we love Him because He first loved us. The bible says we love much because we are forgiven much. And this is exactly the point, you see. Christian life ought not to be motivated by guilt. Christian life is to be motivated primarily with love. Oh yes, I need to be sorry for my sins. I need to turn from my wicked ways but it is the goodness of God that leads me to repentance, isn't it?

Can you remember how Jesus dealt with the lady who was caught in adultery? I think people around her were shaking their heads and muttering 'tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. This kind of lady. Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk.' You can hear the tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. It's like crickets all around. Everybody wanted to condemn her except nobody dares to throw the first stone, that's all. But, in John 8:11, Jesus came to this woman and says, 'Neither do I condemn thee.' Then He said, 'Go, and sin no more.' You realize the order? He does not say go and sin no more then I don't condemn you. If it is that way, then no one will ever be saved. But it is first the grace of God, the love of God poured out into our

lives. We experience it, we know it by faith that we say, 'Lord, I love you and I'll go by your grace and sin no more.' I think our Christian lives need to be rooted deeply in the love of God. That's why Paul prays for the church that I pray for you that you may know the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the love of God. When we soak in it, when we drink in of it. Tremendous blessings.

I end today, however, with this thought for you if you are outside Jesus Christ. This is such a loving message but this will be such a scary message for you on the Day of Judgment when you stand before Almighty God because He now stands before you as judge. And His wrath is going to be poured out upon you for your sins because you did not believe in His Son. Jesus Himself tells us:

"He that believeth on Him is not condemned (Tremendous encouragement for you to believe in Him) 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

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36

Would you come to Jesus? Fiery indignation of God's wrath on the Day of Judgment is not what you want. Come to Jesus and be in His strong, secure and unchanging love. Let's bow for a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you again for your holy word and we thank you for the ministry of your Spirit amongst us. I humbly plead that Lord you will bring your words into the hearts of your people that your children today will not walk around with that whole burden and load of guilt but that they will experience and know from the scriptures the comfort of your love. And may the goodness, the grace, the love of God spur us on to new heights in Jesus Christ. O, Lord, help us to know your love. I pray, as Paul prayed, that you'll give us understanding, comprehension, of the strong love of God. I pray today, too, for my friends who are here for the first time. They do not know Jesus. Would you have mercy and grant them that spiritual life? Help them remove the veil, remove the veil of darkness and blindness, that they may see your Son and find salvation and life in Him alone. Indeed, today, may all be about Jesus. We thank you. We have all these in Christ alone. And so we pray all this now humbly, in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless.