

SALVATION NOT CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1

Do you ever get unwanted knocks at your door? Growing up, my dad sold Electrolux vacuums by knocking on strangers' doors and convincing them to buy something they didn't know they needed. I remember the Girl Scouts regularly ringing our doorbell to sell their cookies. And I definitely remember the Swans truck pulling up the drive. Yet while practice of door-to-door sales is still done, it is not as common as it once was. I'm not sure a lot of people even use their front door as their main source of entry these days. We've grown distant, to the point that we go into the box stores to buy our vacuums, and the Girl Scouts are waiting to sell us their cookies when we come out.

Yet, there is one group that still knocks on our doors. That group is the Jehovah Witnesses, and before Covid-19 hit, they regularly rang my doorbell. The last time they came for a "visit," I frankly did not have the conversation that I was expecting. I was prepared for an argument that would be based on their standard misunderstandings of God. Things like:

>"The word 'Trinity' isn't in the Bible"

>And/or their whole naïve understanding of Greek and its use of indefinite articles as seen in their misquoting of John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was "a" god.*

They have a whole host of issues, and I thought they would bring them up one right after another, but to my surprise, they didn't! Part of the reasons behind that may be due to the fact that they knew that I am a pastor. (They keep notes, and they've been to my house enough to know my occupation.) I must say that they were polite—stating that they were out knocking on doors to encourage people to read their Bible—a *very good thing!* So, having broached the subject of God's Word, I tried to keep them reminded of Scripture's statements that our only hope for salvation is Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross. Interestingly, their replies kept coming back to Romans 8.

Paraphrasing v38-39, they said, "*Nothing shall separate us from the love of God,*" and in part, that's what those verses say—*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God....*" That's where they stopped! But notice that is not where the verse stops. Notice what they left out in verse 39—"*Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ our Lord.*" That is no small detail to leave out!

They also referred to Romans 8:1 saying—"There is no condemnation to those who love God." Again, this is a valuable verse, but they did not quote it correctly. Verse 1 actually says (and notice again what they left out), "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*

In both cases, these men were not being honest with the Scripture they were encouraging people to read for they purposefully left out the fact that Romans 8 teaches us that our salvation—our hope for eternal life—rests completely in Jesus Christ. They purposefully left it out because in their false teaching, they deny the deity of Christ—a heresy called "Arianism" which was condemned in 321 AD at the First Council of Nicea.

Yet the Bible clearly teaches that our only assurance and hope for eternal life is found in the Lord Jesus alone. So for the remainder of this article, I want us to look at Romans 8:1 and note this truth: *In Christ we find Salvation, not Condemnation.*

I will start with this question: What do these words mean: "*There is No Condemnation to Them Which Are in Christ Jesus*"? Certainly, there is dynamite packed in those 11 words! Any Jew would have bristled at that thought because to him, salvation was found in the Law. Any Gentile could also take issue because to him, it's foolish to look to a crucified Savior! So what do those words mean? Let's break them down:

>Condemnation—This is a word that Paul only uses 3 times in all of his letters (here, Rom 5:16, & Rom 5:18)

<>The term means, "*a judicial pronouncement upon a guilty person, a punishment/penalty.*"

<>In Romans 5, Paul uses this term as he speaks of Adam's transgression against God. The line of reasoning is that in the Garden, Adam only had one rule: "Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," but he willingly disobeyed God. That willing disobedience had devastating results—to the point that sin was passed down to all of Adam's progeny. Paul tells us in Romans 3:10 that *there is none righteous, no not one*. Because of Adam's disobedience, we are all born sinners with a sin nature, and like our parents in the Garden, we all choose our own way over God's.

<>That obstinate disobedience to God creates within God an obligation. He must either ignore our sin. or He must judge it. Scripture teaches that because God is holy (set apart from sin), because He is true, because God is always fair and always just He cannot ignore our sin; therefore, He pronounces us guilty! In short, we are condemned. The payment and punishment for our condemnation is eternal death—an eternity separated from God in Hell.

That is the ugliness of sin, but notice the beauty of Rom 8:1—*there is NO* condemnation to certain people. Who are those people? The next phrase tells us, yet it is the very phrase the JW's left out of our conversation: *there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*. Those powerful words convey this truth: *not all men are condemned*. However, they also convey this reality: *not all are forgiven either*. In other words, this verse does not allow for *Universalism* which says that in the end, God will let everyone off the hook! Nor does it commend itself to the JW doctrine of *Annihilationism* which says that in the end, everyone outside of the Church, will simply cease to exist.

This verse teaches that all who put their faith and their absolute confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ find freedom from the penalty of sin. Such people have renounced all attempts to get to God on their own, and they are trusting Christ as their Savior...their Substitute...their Redeemer. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*.

That leads me to this question: "How Would I Know if I am 'In Christ?'" It is the question I want to take up in our next article; however, for the present, I think it good for us to consider the riches that Christ has provided. As P.P. Bliss so rightfully penned, "*Guilty, vile, and helpless we; Spotless Lamb of God was He; 'Full atonement!' can it be? Hallelujah! What a Savior!*" Without Christ, we are lost for all of eternity. Yet because of Christ, we have the undeserved privilege of finding pardon for sin and knowing the saving grace of God.

I am convinced that while we live under the mandates and orders of the Covid-19 home confinement, no one will knock on my door and try to pedal a false religion. However, while I remain at home, I can read my Bible. I can dwell upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus. And I can give praise to Him for all that He accomplished for me. So during these days, I would encourage us to meditate and dwell upon Christ whose substitutionary atonement removed our guilt, set us free from the penalty of sin, and provided eternal life with God. To Him be glory and honor forever, Amen!