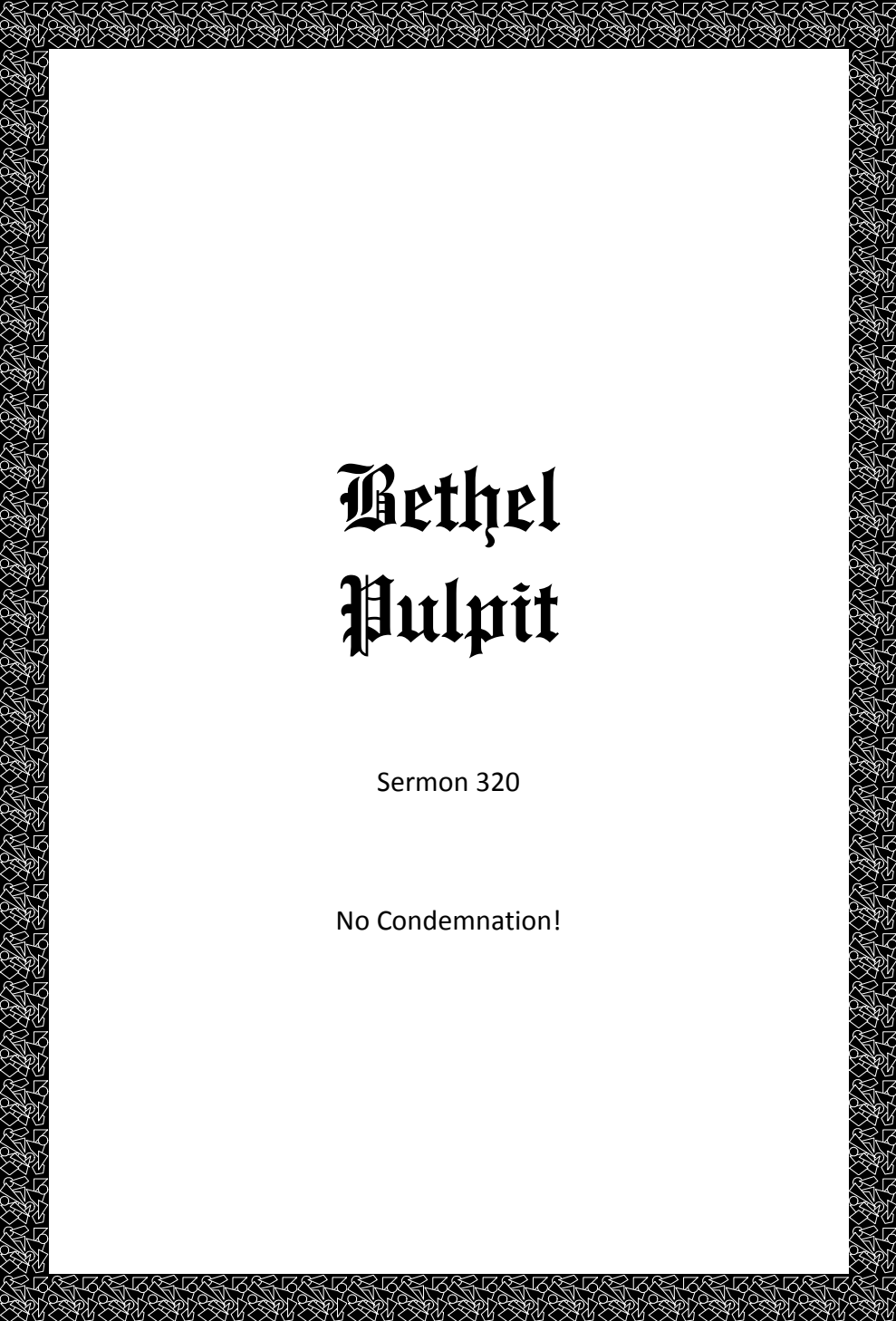




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 320

No Condemnation!

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 26th February, 2012**

Text: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8. 1).*

In the great day when you and I meet our Maker and stand before the judgment seat, we shall either receive the white stone, *no condemnation*, or else we shall be condemned eternally to endless woe. So the great, the vital point for you and me is to know how we shall stand in that great day, and bringing it closer, to know how we stand even now. Because if this beautiful word speaks of *no condemnation*, we are reminded that every one of us by nature is in a state of condemnation. God is holy, righteous. He has given a holy law. We have broken that law. So we stand condemned by it. The law cannot save us. The law cannot forgive us. The law cannot justify us. Here we are, the whole human race, condemned through a broken law, condemned by a holy God. These are things that matter eternally. This should be our chief, our great concern. Is there any way a lost, ruined, guilty sinner can escape condemnation? Ah, but the point is, do you and I know anything about condemnation? Do we feel anything in our heart, in our conscience of condemnation because of our sin, because of our failure? And if we do, well the vital point: is there any way of escape from this condemnation which is just, which we deserve?

Here the apostle through the Holy Spirit most beautifully opens up the glorious gospel of the grace of God, that God has a people, and that people shall never know condemnation. One of our hymns speaks really beautifully of this:

"In Thy bosom safely lodgèd,
Thine shall rest from danger free;
They shall never more be judgèd,
Nor shall condemnation see;
Blessed Jesus,
Let us thus rejoice in Thee."

“There is therefore *now*” – not just in the judgment day – *now*. “There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” So that is the secret. That is who these people are. These are the ones, the only ones who shall be set free from condemnation. And we are told who they are: “Them which are in Christ Jesus.”

“Out of Christ, almighty power
Can do nothing but devour.”

Out of Christ there is no forgiveness, no salvation, no justification. Out of Christ it must be condemnation eternally. But, “There *is* therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Now you must have noticed, beloved friends, this is one of Paul’s favourite expressions: “In Christ Jesus,” and he uses it two ways. God’s people were in Christ from everlasting in covenant bonds, in eternal union which can never be broken. So there never was a time when the Lord’s people were not in Christ Jesus – that is, in their standing eternally in the covenant of grace. But secondly, and Paul seems to speak of this more especially here, those who are brought into Christ Jesus experimentally as led by the Spirit of God, who have this living union with Christ through faith – “Them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Now in this second sense, none of us are there by nature. We are in the world, dead in sin. We are not in Christ Jesus. But everyone who is one day going to be in heaven, everyone who is going to be forgiven, everyone who is going to be free from condemnation, will be brought to this through living faith in Christ Jesus. It is opened up in so many ways in Scripture, perhaps specially like this: a hiding place, a refuge, a rock, a cleft in the rock; a sinner feeling his danger, feeling the dreadful danger of condemnation, feeling the dreadful danger of eternal wrath, feeling his need as a sinner. “What shall I do, or whither flee, to escape the vengeance due to me?” And then led by the Spirit, fleeing for refuge to Jesus.

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

And so this sinner by precious faith enters into Christ as his only hope, his only plea – Christ in His finished work, Christ in His righteousness, Christ in His precious blood. And that sinner enters in by faith, and he finds a

hiding place there, and so he is not only in Christ by everlasting bonds in covenant before the world was, but now personally, and by faith, and experimentally, and feelingly, he enters into Christ his only hope, his only refuge, into the resting place, and there he is safe, and there he is secure, and there he is free from condemnation.

“Them which are in Christ Jesus.” Now have you a sweet hope that through grace you are found in Christ Jesus? Or is that your chief desire, as it was the chief desire of the great apostle himself? He said, “That I may ... be found in Him.” O that I, a guilty sinner, O that I, deserving condemnation, might be found in Christ, hidden in the clefts of His side, safe and secure from every danger, from the wrath of God, delivered from condemnation. “Them which are in Christ Jesus.” And if you and I are in Christ Jesus, then we can never be condemned; then we are free from condemnation.

“And if God the Spirit reveal this to you,
Take refuge in Jesus, though hell should pursue.”

Those of you who feel your need, those of you who are concerned, it is fleeing for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel. And how solemn if any of us never feel a concern about this, the condemnation of a just, holy, gracious God, and our standing in the great day. How shall you and I do then?

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Well, the beloved disciple John in his gospel has quite a few things to speak on this, the deliverance from condemnation, and also what it is to be found in Christ, to enter into Christ. I think you will find with John, when he writes of this, he speaks of true faith, true believing, as this entering into Christ. Now let me just remind you of one or two places and one or two things. “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world.” That was not the purpose of His coming. He will condemn the world in the last great day. But, “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned.” That is the fleeing for refuge to Jesus. That is the entering into Christ by faith as a sinner.

“Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay.”

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Now there you have the two things: the condemnation and the freedom from condemnation. I will read it again. “He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” That is where you and I are by nature. And then another place where John takes it up: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” So the Apostle John.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” So if there is no condemnation, what is it? Well, there is the forgiveness for sin, and more than that, there is the sentence of justification, because really the opposite of condemnation in the New Testament is justification. “There is therefore now no condemnation.” He is forgiven; he is justified.

“For us the dear Redeemer died;
Why are we then ashamed?
We stand for ever justified,
And cannot be condemned.”

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The wonder of it, the glory of it! It all springs from grace. It is all from the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is a standing that can never change. It is a standing that can never be altered. This chapter begins *no condemnation*; it ends, *no separation*. And across every verse you see this: *everlasting love*.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Well, you say, How can this be? What is the secret of it? We see the mercy of it, the love. We see the grace. But this sinner has sinned. He has broken God’s holy law. He deserves to be condemned. How can he be free from condemnation? How can he be free, and more than that, how can he be forgiven? How can he be accounted just? Well,

if you want the answer, when you go home, read through that wonderful chapter, Isaiah chapter 53. You see it all there.

“Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.”

What is it? Our glorious Saviour in His Suretyship takes the condemned sinner’s place and He suffers as if He was the one condemned. He bears the condemnation. He bears it away. The Just is punished in the place of the unjust. The condemned sinner’s debt is paid. Divine justice is satisfied. Divine justice cannot condemn when the debt has been paid and the condemnation has been borne and borne away. But it is more than that. “In thy Surety thou art free,” and His glorious righteousness reckoned to His people’s account, those who are in Christ Jesus, just as if that righteousness were their own. O the wonder of a verse like this! Really, it is the foundation of the gospel and without it there would not be any gospel. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” It is all because of what Christ has done at Calvary in making an atonement for sin.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And there cannot be any condemnation in the great day. Perhaps you noticed as we read the chapter, that before it ends, Paul takes up this point again, the point of the first verse, and really he throws it down as a challenge. He says, “Who is he that condemneth?” There is a challenge there. And then He comes up with the answer to “Who is he that condemneth?” Well there are plenty who condemn. A holy God condemns, because the sinner has sinned against Him and is guilty in His sight. Divine justice condemns, because divine justice has been affronted and dishonoured. The holy law of God condemns. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Satan condemns. Your own conscience condemns. You have to acknowledge that the condemnation is true. “Who is he that condemneth?” Well, you could give half a dozen answers to it. “It is Christ that died.” That is the answer to all these accusers. It is the answer to all those who would condemn. A holy God satisfied in the death of Christ; divine justice now on the sinner’s side. Joseph Hart said,

“Here’s an amazing change indeed!
Justice is now for me.”

It has the answer in its hand. The holy law of God fulfilled. That wonderful truth, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” And Satan is turned away. He is a defeated foe.

Ah, but what about your conscience? This is where you want the sentence to be passed. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” There is everything there in the death of Christ. There is God’s answer and it is an everlasting answer to all those who would condemn a lost, ruined, guilty sinner who has fled for refuge to Jesus and who hangs his hope there. There are a lot of you in this chapel concerned about this, unless I am deceived, and may the Lord seal it to your heart that now, even now there is no condemnation for you as you are found in Christ Jesus.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.” He puts a *rather* on it.

“His death procured thy peace,
His resurrection’s thine.”

His resurrection, the seal that His Father is satisfied. He has accepted all that Christ has done, that everything is accomplished which the Saviour came to accomplish. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God.” “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

“Who also maketh intercession for us.” That is, He pleads on the two grounds: His relationship to His Father, O but secondly, the whole work of redemption, the whole work of salvation to deliver a guilty sinner from condemnation. “Who also maketh intercession for us.” “But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” These are they who are found in Christ Jesus, who know no condemnation. “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Well then, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Now the close of the verse is really an answer to those who would say, Well, if this sinner is forgiven, if he can never know condemnation, if it is all of grace, it is nothing to do with his merit, well, they say, if you believe this, he can do what he wishes; he can live as he likes. Paul will have that cleared up. “God forbid,” he says in another place. These who have fled for refuge to Jesus, these who are in Christ Jesus, they “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Let us be clear: this is not the *ground* of their salvation, the *ground* of their justification, the *ground* of their freedom from condemnation. That is all in Christ, Christ crucified. But this is their *character*. This is flowing from love. This is the sanctifying work of the Spirit. This is marking them out as those who really, truly are in Christ Jesus. And it is exactly the same point as with our Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, that woman brought to Him in the very act of adultery. You remember that one by one they all went out, and when she was left alone, the Lord Jesus said, “Woman ... hath no man condemned thee?” She said, No man, Lord.... *Go, and sin no more.*”

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” If you have a sweet hope that you are delivered from condemnation, if you have a sweet hope that you are in Christ, you will not want the world; you will not want the flesh; you will not want to dishonour the Saviour who has done so much for you. You will long to honour Him; you will long to walk worthy of Him. You will not want to walk after the flesh; you will want to walk after the Spirit.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Well, these are wonderful truths, glorious truths, and what we need is for the Holy Spirit to seal them in our hearts. You have the sweet hope of it. You have the venture of faith. It is your only ground of hope. You have no other. But you long for the Holy Spirit to seal these things in your heart: no condemnation, no separation, everlasting love.

“No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And the apostle says, “*Now*” – not just in the great day, but now; now and to all eternity. “Now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” I thought of that beautiful, well-known hymn of Charles Wesley. (The whole hymn is a synopsis, if you will, of Romans 8.) As he closes it, he ends it all with this, and it is high assurance. I hope and pray the Lord will seal it by His Spirit to some hearts here this evening.

“No condemnation now I dread;
For Christ, and all He is, are mine;
Risen with Him, our living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.”

Well, may the Lord bless us like that, seal that in our hearts.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”