

A Word from Pastor Chuck



SIX VITAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE—PART 4

Who is he that condemneth?

Romans 8:34a

Satan constantly condemns me. Every time I fail to do something that I know I should have done, Satan comes in with heavy condemnation. I often condemn myself, realizing I can't live up to God's holy standards. But I'm thrilled that there is One who does not condemn me—Jesus.

Jesus Makes Intercession

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.

Romans 8:34b

Paul is saying, "Jesus Christ isn't condemning you; He died for you. In fact, He's risen again from the dead and is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for you." Far from condemning us, Jesus intercedes for us.

John wrote, *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* (1 John 2:1). Jesus is my advocate—representing me, not condemning me—before the Father.

Jesus Doesn't Condemn

When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus in John 3, He said that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. Jesus said, "He who believes in Me is not condemned" (see 3:18a).

This reminds us of Romans 8:1, which states, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

But Jesus went on to say, "He that believes not in Me is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (see John 3:18b-19). Men reject Jesus Christ because they love darkness rather than light.

Recall the story of the woman the Pharisees brought to Jesus. They declared that they had caught her in the act of adultery and condemned her by saying to Jesus, "Our law says we're to stone her. What do You say?"

Jesus replied, "I say unto you, whichever one of you is without sin, you throw the first stone." Then as He wrote on the ground, they each became convicted and began to walk away, until none was left. Jesus stood up, looked at the woman, and said, "What happened to your accusers?" She said, "Well, Sir, I guess I don't have any."

Because of the salvation He would provide on the cross, Jesus could say those beautiful words to this woman: "*Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*" (John 8:11b).

Gentle Conviction

When we fall into sin, the Holy Spirit convicts us, gently saying, "Now, that wasn't right. You shouldn't have responded that way. You reacted in anger out of your own flesh." He doesn't condemn; He convicts.

The Holy Spirit works in our hearts to conform us into the image of Christ by pointing out areas in need of improvement. John said, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:8-9).

When the Holy Spirit makes me aware of my failures in His gentle way, I can't wait to say, "Oh, Lord, I'm so sorry. Please, Lord, I receive Your forgiveness now. Thank You, Jesus, for Your love and for the cleansing of my sin." I race to the cross.

Satan's Tricks

In contrast, Satan always condemns us, pointing an accusing finger to make us focus on our failure rather than on God's strength. The accuser attempts to persuade us that we have to earn God's favor because we don't deserve to be saved or blessed by God.

Satan often says to me, "You are a mess—you have failed so many times. God ought to give up on you. There's no hope for you. You knew better than doing that, and yet you did it anyway."

I used to listen to him, thinking, "He's right; I really shouldn't pray. I really shouldn't expect God to do anything for me." And Satan would drive me away from God: I wouldn't feel like fellowshipping, reading the Bible, or praying because I really didn't deserve forgiveness. But I have learned that Satan's purpose in showing me my failures is a trick to drive me away from the place of help. Now when he does that, I just smile and say, "You're right, Satan. I am a mess, but Jesus died for messes like me. You don't scare me away from the cross, you only drive me to it, for there is my only hope."

Brought to the Cross

We will experience real peace when we remember the Scriptures:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

James 4:7-8a

While the enemy's condemnation drives us away from God, the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to the cross. As the Spirit convicts us, He draws us to that place of forgiveness, cleansing, strength, and power, which is found only in Jesus Christ. ↩