

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (Opening)

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Introduction

Left and right; up and down; north and south; black and white; life is full of these polar opposites.

When I said black and white what did you think of?

I would venture to say that a majority of people in the US who pay any attention to the news would have instantly thought of what's going on in Missouri. If you don't know what's going on, consider yourself blessed.

Both sides of the conflict think they know what's right. The question is, do they really know what happened, who is in the wrong, or is it just an assumption based on rumor?

So many people these days get information from untrustworthy sources, and end up acting or reacting based on incomplete or inaccurate information.

All the stuff that's going on in Missouri right now just points to the fact that there are still divisions here in this country, and like Abraham Lincoln said (quoting Jesus) "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

When two sides can't agree and start pointing fingers and blaming each other, that's when things start to fall apart.

It may be a bit of a stretch, but I'm going to eventually relate all of this to the first two paragraphs of Romans chapter 8. Turn there with me.

Romans 8:1-11

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in

order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

[What Paul Said](#)

We went over most of this scripture last week, but in a nutshell, here's what Paul is saying here.

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, our sins are covered. Covered in two ways, really. First, our sins are covered as in paid for. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross. Second, our sins are covered as in buried and hidden. Our sins are covered over with the blood of Jesus, and when God looks at us as His children, all He sees is the blood of Christ, and because of that He sees righteousness; a righteousness that we can't have on our own, because our flesh keeps causing us to sin.

So, because our sins are covered, both paid for and hidden, there's no condemnation, as long as we're in Christ. And to be in Christ, you need to be immersed into His death and raised again to new life.

So, since I've already talked about this section of scripture, why am I going over it again? Well, first of all, this is good news, right? And who

doesn't want to hear good news over and over again! But second, I have to wonder if we really get the real impact of what Paul is saying.

Let's take a look at this word condemnation. The Greek word that is translated as condemnation is **κατάκριμα** [*katakrima* /kat·ak·ree·mah/]. Katakrima is a compound word, made up of two other words. The first word is **κατά**, [*kata* /kat·ah/] which means against, and the second word is **κρίνω** [*krino* /kree·no/] which means to judge. So, this compound word literally means to judge against, or to make a judgment against.

Because we are in Christ, covered by His blood in those two ways, then there is no way that God can make a judgment against us, because the payment has been made already.

The mind-bending part of all this is that the covering, the payment is continuous. Jesus is always doing it, even though He did it only once. He paid the price for all sin once, for all people who will accept His payment in their place, and for all time. As long as we remain in Christ, obeying His will and have His spirit, the Holy Spirit living in us, then we are covered, and not condemned.

So, here's the reason we're still looking at this verse. We are not condemned by God for our sins as long as we're in Christ, but we feel free to condemn our brothers and sisters in Christ for their sins, which are no worse than our sins that we know are covered by Christ.

[Individual condemnation](#)

Paul says we're going to sin. He talked about how he struggled with sin in the end of Romans chapter 7. Basically, he says no matter how hard he tried, he still did the wrong thing. Even worse, when he tried to do good things, he ended up doing bad things!

So if Paul couldn't do it, how are we expected to live without sinning? We're not, but we need to keep trying. And to keep trying to not sin,

we need to help each other through. That's what Paul said to the Christians in Galatia. Let's look at Galatians 6:1-5.

Galatians 6:1-5

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load.

Paul points out here that we should be bearing our own burdens, but in the sense that we have to deal with our own battle within ourselves, the battle between the flesh and the spirit. But because of that we should understand that our brothers (and sisters) are struggling with their own inner battles, and we need to help them when we can, but make sure we are careful to protect ourselves from falling into the same sin that they are involved in.

So, if you see that your brother has a problem with a particular sin, you should gently correct him and let him know that he's not alone; that we are all sinners and we're all working on areas in our lives that we do things that we shouldn't.

Jesus reminds us that we're all sinners, and that we need to be aware of that when we're helping our fellow sinners. During the sermon on the mount, in Matthew 7, Jesus says this:

Matthew 7:1-5

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you

say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

The judging that Jesus is talking about is the first step toward condemnation that we're supposed to be free from that Paul talks about in Romans 8. The Greek word here for judge is κρίνω [krino /kree·no/]; to judge or distinguish in a legal sense.

Jesus says we need to understand our own sins and our own vulnerability, our own internal war between spirit and flesh, before we approach our brother or sister to gently and lovingly try to correct him or her.

Loving correction is the key here. We should do everything we do out of love. The kind of love that's a choice, not a feeling. Agape love is what I'm talking about; the selfless, giving without thought of return kind of love that Jesus showed us when He was here on earth, and continues to show us even now.

Peter pointed it out this way in his first letter.

1 Peter 4:7-9

⁷ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Our love for each other should make it easier to forgive the wrongdoing of our brothers and sisters. Not that we should ignore the intentional sin, as we saw back in Galatians 6, but that true agape love will smooth off the rough edges that we all have, and that sometimes in a worldly situation may cause friction.

Corporate Condemnation

But what happens if we don't do something about a brother or sister who is sinning? What if we know about something and don't say anything? Or what if a brother or sister has a doctrinal difference with us; a difference of opinion or interpretation regarding something we do as a church family, or during worship?

Unfortunately, as a group, the churches of Christ have a horrible history of causing internal strife and arguments within the fellowship, and dividing church families.

It's been going on for years. Someone has a strong opinion on how something should be done, and when it's not done that way they become offended. Because of the culture of personality and pride, some people won't listen to differing opinions on interpretation of meanings, and this causes church families to split.

Paul tried to stem the tide of divisions in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus by explaining that with so much spiritual oneness, how can we have divisions?

Ephesians 4:1-7

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

We are all human, and because of that we're not going to agree on everything, but Paul lists the things that we must agree on, those things that we cannot compromise on in any way. Paul lists seven "ones" in

verses 4-6. One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all; these are the things that give us unity in the body of Christ. These are the things we must agree on. Period.

Paul warns the Christians in Rome, in chapter 16 of Romans, to watch for people who are compromising on one of these seven “ones”.

Romans 16:17-18

¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Another big problem that divides church families is what I call the culture of personality. Most of the mega-churches in the US are driven by this. An outgoing and charismatic speaker attracts a huge following, whether they speak the truth or not. These people who do not speak the truth but attract a huge following mislead thousands and sometimes millions of people, pulling them away from the truth.

Paul dealt with the culture of personality in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. They were dividing the church family there based on who immersed them. I doubt, since Cephas or Peter, and Apollos were both well-known and well-grounded evangelists, that they were teaching error.

Let's read what Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has

been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Paul appeals to his brothers in Christ stop dividing the family and to live in a spirit of unity.

Conclusion

When we say we're right, we automatically point out that the other person is wrong, and that's when condemnation begins. All the people in this country who are pointing fingers at each other need to realize that we are all equally bad.

I've said it many times before. We're all broken, and only Jesus can fix us. Our sin keeps us away from God; we're so sinful He can't even look at us. But if we're in Christ, covered with His blood, God only sees Christ when He looks at us. Christ took our sins on himself, and died on the cross in our place, so those of us who accept His sacrifice are equally covered by His blood, and the grace of God, His gift to us that we don't deserve.

The point I want to leave you with today is that we should live with a spirit of unity, in so far as it doesn't compromise one of those seven "ones" that Paul talked about back in Ephesians.

We as a body of faith have said for years that we speak where the Bible speaks and we're silent where the Bible is silent. I think we need to all examine ourselves and make sure we are following the Bible, and the Bible only, not what some man has decided is what we're supposed to believe.

Don't trust anything I say on faith. I'm a man, and I make mistakes. Check what I tell you and accept it only if I'm right. And if I'm wrong, I hope and pray that you tell me.

Jude 24-25 (Closing)

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Bible Study

Matthew 18:10-20

¹⁰ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹² What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Matthew 6:7-15

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
10 Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread,
12 and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Romans 15:1-3

¹ We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor

for his good, to build him up. ³ For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."

John 17:20-23

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.