

# "Condemnation"

Romans 8:1-11 & Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

July 10, 2005

A young girl named, Kelli, age 3, would say her nightly prayers, with her brother Cody. As most children do, we have to bless every family member, every friend, and every animal (current and past). For several weeks, after we had finished the nightly prayer, Kelli would say, "And all girls." As this soon became part of her nightly routine, to include this at the end, her mother finally asked her, "Kelli, why do you always add the part about all girls?" Her response, "Because we always finish our prayers by saying 'All Men!' I thought we should pray for all girls too."

The preacher's 5 year-old daughter noticed that her father always paused and bowed his head, for a moment, before starting his sermon. One day, she asked him why. "Well, Honey," he began, proud that his daughter was so observant of his messages, "I'm asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon." "How come He doesn't do it?" she asked.

A rabbi said to a precocious six-year-old boy, "So your mother says your prayers for you each night? Very commendable. What does she say?" The little boy replied, "Thank God he's in bed!"

This morning I would like to talk to you about a really serious subject. It is a subject that is addressed by our scriptures this morning and one with which we are very familiar. We are afraid of it and yet we do it all of the time - in fact many of us are very good at it and seem to enjoy doing it. It is an activity that even God gets involved with but it is also one of those points at which we can see very clearly the difference between God and us. Since I did not print the sermon title in the bulletin this morning you may not have figured out what the subject the sermon is as of yet. What is the subject - "condemnation"! Condemnation that does not come as gently or innocently as a child asking why God doesn't help the pastor with his sermon or a mother who is thankful for bed time. The condemnation that we are so good at is too often devastating and personal.

The Apostle Paul writes to the church at Rome to talk about living life either according to 'the flesh' or following 'the Spirit of God'. The language of the text is very 'religious' and sounds so 'churchy' that it is easy to let the word flow in one ear and out the other. But the words contain so much that is of great importance that I hope you will listen well. I hope that you will be good soil that will receive this word and allow it to grow in your life.

In what the Apostle Paul says is the bottom line that tells us that if we chose to live by the ways of the flesh - it will lead to death. But if we chose to live by the ways of the Spirit - that will lead to peace and life. We have heard it all before - perhaps so often that we just yawn. It is too pious to be believable for many people - I think that for many it sounds like "now be a good little Christian boy or girls and everything will be wonderful - and if you aren't a good little Christian and you do anything 'worldly' you are going to DIE! It is just not very believable for a lot of people and I think that it is far from what Paul intended.

Maybe that is one reason that so many people just don't listen very closely to God's word. We have often made it too simplistic - too pious. In fact - when I first read through these scriptures, I thought that I would just emphasize the point that we are not very good listeners. Like the poor soils on which the seed falls, we just are not very receptive to what the Word of God has to say at times.

Jesus tells this parable about seed and soil and I wanted to talk about how important it is to be good soil so that we can receive God's word and let it grow in our lives. We know all about seeds and soil around here - we know why it grows in one place and why it fails to grow in another. It is not as easy trying to figure out why God's Word does not take root and grow in the lives of many people. The explanation that Jesus gives in the parable is pretty good. There are the 'cares of the world, troubles that we face, and even the lure of wealth and possessions - there are forces that steal the word away and times when life just get too hot for us - all of which draw us away from God and His guidance for life. As true as God's word may be we just think that there is something better.

I do believe that all of this is true for all of us at times in our lives.. In a very general way we constantly preach this message - receive and follow the Word of God and you will have life and peace!. But we do not have ears to hear. As I considered these scriptures I found myself hearing in a new way as I was confronted with a specific example. And that example finally brings us back to the subject of condemnation.

Specifically, how is it that living by the Spirit of God leads to life and peace where living by the flesh leads to death. The way of God is a way of forgiveness and love - it is a way in which He lifts condemnation from the people He loves - and yet the sin that so destroys our lives continues to be condemned - - - As I considered this text again this week I found myself thinking about how different we are from God. It seems that too often we are unable to separate the person from the sin. When we condemn, we condemn the person that has sinned against us at the same time we condemn the sin. And when we do that darkness falls and relationships are torn apart.

God condemns sin - but people He forgives. Can we do the same in the relationships that are so important to us? Condemnation seems to come so naturally to us. I was trying to find some kind of example concerning how quickly

and easily we condemn. I tried looking on the internet and I was surprised when an ebay listing popped up. This is what it said:

**Find great deals on condemnation at bay!**

You can find practically anything on e-bay, even condemnation. At bay you can buy or sell electronics, cars, clothing, apparel, collectibles, sporting goods, digital cameras and more. Click here and sign up today for FREE!

We do condemn so easily and we feel the condemnation of other over so many things. Yet God calls us to follow in His footsteps. He condemns sin but forgives the sinner, Do we have ears to hear? It is such good news for us. Will we be the good soil that produces fruits of forgiveness and love in our relationships?

AMEN