**Romans 8:1-4**

Introduction

I. “The Gap”

A. Many of us live with this underlying question: “Am I enough”

 1. We experience a huge gap between who we are and who we ought to be

a. The Bible presents us with commands and ideals for how we are to live, and we fall far short of those ideals

 b. The culture also presents us with ideals that we fall short of

2. In the midst of this gap, we often feel as though there is a level of condemnation from God

Ex: We may feel as though God is disappointed with us, critical of us, not really for us, has mixed feelings towards us, or loves us but only because he has to and in a way that simply puts up with us

3. We often try to cover and hide in order to make up for our sense of inadequacy and failure, and one of the ways we do that is by pursuing religion

a. We think that if we pursue religious rituals, practices, and disciplines we can relieve our sense of failure and inadequacy

b. Image: It’s like trying to climb up a ladder in order to gain and maintain God’s approval

 c. Paul describes this as “Life under the Law”

= working in our own strength to try to obey God’s commands in order to avoid his condemnation and gain his approval

 d. Life under the law never works

1) It doesn’t relieve our sense of inadequacy. In fact, it can make it more acute

2) It doesn’t change our hearts

II. The Gospel

Paul is saying there is another way to live. Another solution to our experience of the gap. It is not something we can do; it is something God has done for us

The Passage

I. What God has done in Christ (v. 3)

A. “What the law was powerless to do”

 1. The law cannot sanctify us (= change our hearts)

2. The law cannot justify us (= offer complete forgiveness when we fail to live up to its demands)

3. The law was “weakened by the sinful nature” (ultimately it’s not the law’s fault but sin’s fault)

B. “God did”

 1. The gospel is not about what we can do for God but what God has done for us

 2. “by sending his own son”

 God did not spare his most precious son in order to save us

 3. “in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering

a. Jesus was fully man (which was required for him to pay the penalty for humanity’s sins)

b. On the cross Jesus became a sin offering as all our sin was laid on him

4. “God condemned sin in sinful man”

On the cross all of God’s condemnation towards our sin was expressed towards Jesus instead of us. Our sins have already been condemned!

 5. “In order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us”

a. Jesus fully met the law’s requirements

 1) He lived a perfect life of perfect obedience to the law

2) He died a perfect death in terms of paying the full penalty that law requires for sin

b. When we put our faith in Christ, we are “in Christ” (v. 1 and 2), so it’s as if we ourselves have fully met the law’s requirements. When God sees us, he sees us as being in Christ

c. So we are justified in God’s sight

6. The cross bridges the gap between who we are and who we ought to be

II. The result of what God has done: no condemnation (v. 1)

A. “No” condemnation

1. There is not one hint or trace of condemnation left in God’s heart towards us

2. Many Christians still feel a level of condemnation from God, but they don’t have to

3. The Song “It Is Well”: “My sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more!”

B. “Now”

1. Right now, whether we feel it or not, God is not condemning us if we’ve put our faith in Christ

2. Many Christians think they have to clean themselves up and start living more spiritual lives before they can experience this “no condemnation” state, but that is not true

C. “In Christ”

 1. Not everyone receives this promise of no condemnation—only those who are in Christ

2. Many Christians try to internalize God’s forgiveness but they leave Christ out of the equation. They simply try to convince themselves that God is a gracious and forgiving God, but that strategy leaves them insecure because they continue to read passages of Scripture that talk about his judgment

3. Only when we realize that we are “in Christ” will we fully embrace the reality that there is no condemnation. We must remember that our sins have already been condemned in Christ, so it would be unjust for God to condemn the same sins a second time.

Conclusion

I. What would it look like for you to live more deeply/freely in this reality of no condemnation?

= every time you experience the gap between who you are and who you ought to be, rather than try to cover and hide or make up for the gap, go directly to the cross and experience God’s forgiveness and grace

II. What would it look like to help one another live in this reality of no condemnation in our friendships, marriages, and parenting?

**Discussion Questions**

1. On Sunday we talked about “the gap” we often feel between who we actually are and who we ought to be based on what the Bible or the culture is telling us we should be. Where do you tend to feel this gap most obviously in your own life? How does that express itself?

2. We also discussed that, while most Christians believe in their heads that “there is no condemnation,” they often don’t believe that in their hearts. Their hearts believe other things about God’s posture towards them (examples were given on Sunday such as “God is disappointed with me,” or “God is critical of me,” or “God is not really for me but is secretly out to get me,” or “God has mixed feelings towards me—some grace and some judgment,” or “God loves me simply because he has to and he basically puts up with me.”) Do you relate to any of those examples? Do you have another example of your own?

3. Discuss together why it is so important to keep the “in Christ Jesus” phrase in verse one: “there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

4. How do fit the idea that there is no condemnation together with other verses that talk about God’s continued hatred towards sin and the New Testament’s continued warnings against sin and God’s continued disciplining of his children?

5. As you consider the two questions in the conclusion, what do you feel most called to do as a result of this passage?

Question 1: What would it look like for you to live more deeply/freely in this reality that there is no condemnation?

Question 2: What would it look like to help one another live in this reality of no condemnation (you may want to pick one particular relationship such as a friend or spouse or other family member)?