

Romans: No Condemnation...

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[0 : 00] If you want to have a lot of policemen follow you around in Central, in IFC you carry a big green bag with me written on it.

And you have somebody follow you with a video camera. I guarantee you, you'll have a lot of people follow you. You know, we all kind of carry stuff on our journey.

We're all carrying stuff. We talk about it often when we're on journeys. And we have this baggage that we carry with us. Sometimes we carry stuff that is harmful.

We think it's good. We think it brings life. But we grab onto it like it's going to give us all that we need. But it actually ends up killing us. And so we're packing for these journeys.

And I think some of us right here are packing right now, right? Some of us are about to go on these journeys. And some of us are leaving Hong Kong for good. And some of us are going on vacations. And we're packing all our stuff, everything we think we need, everything we think that's vital.

[1 : 00] And I got to confess to you guys, man, I just, I hate packing. And I've been trying to figure out why I hate packing and unpacking. And I think I realize it's because I'm just terrible at it.

I mean, I'm just terrible at packing stuff. I always pack more than I need. And I don't ever use what I bring. And so we started this thing about four years in our family that before we go on a trip, all of us packed the night before.

And then we all bring our luggage out. And Christina checks our luggage to make sure that everything is in there that we need. And, you know, I'm always like, well, I'm going to read 20 books. And I put 20 books in there.

And she goes, you're only going to read like half a book. And so she takes 19 books out. And she's taking stuff out of the kids' stuff. And, you know, we do this because four years ago we didn't do it. And four years ago we were going on home leave.

And we figured out that we'd send Christina back with the kiddos two weeks earlier. And so we packed them up and we took them to the airport. And, you know, it's always humiliating as a dad, right?

[2 : 03] You walk in there and you have, you know, five passports. And the lady looks at you and she goes, okay, so one adult and four children. And she looks at you and you're like, yeah, I'm a terrible dad.

You know, I'm sending my wife home with the kids all by herself. And the lady kind of scorns. And we kiss and they go off. And I come home and I'm just, I'm kind of tired. And we did a lot of packing and traveling and getting there.

So I sit down on the couch and I want to, I want to watch TV, right? And so we had cleaned the house up because we were leaving and keep the house clean. And I'm looking all around and I cannot find the remotes at all.

And I'm walking in their house. I'm looking around. I'm like, okay, so this is like, you know, we cleaned up. Where would the kids put the remote? Where would they put that? And then I start looking around and the telephones are missing.

I mean, the handheld, and they were like those big ones back then. They're not this big, right?

They're missing. So I can't, I can't find anything. And so I'm walking around for two hours trying to figure out where, where would they put this?

[3 : 06] If I was a kid, where would I put this? I have no idea. And so finally I just give up and I go to bed. The morning I wake up and I call Christina because they're in San Francisco. And I say, hey, how's it going? And she goes, you never guessed what happened.

And I go, what? And she goes, well, we're going through customs. We had, we were pushing the baby stroller and, and you know, and it keeps beeping. And the guy goes, well, you have anything

in there? No, I promise we took it all out. There's nothing in there.

Beep, beep, beep. And so he reaches his hand in, I mean, that little basket thing right behind that holds everything. He reaches his hand in there and he pulls out the telephone. But he reaches his hand in there and he pulls out the remote controls.

And so my kids, you know, they figured, well, these are important things. We use them every day. So we need to carry them with us wherever we go because we never know where we're not going to need them or where we're going to use them. And, you know, so I'm sitting there listening to that and I'm doing the calculations.

I'm going, okay, so this is two weeks in a house with TVs and electronics without any remote controls. That, ladies, that's like, that's like the worst thing you can do to a guy.

[4 : 08] I mean, that is like, the only thing you can do worse than that is you can put on a dress and you go to your boyfriend or your husband and say, does this dress make me look fat? That's the only other thing that you can do worse than that.

But I was walking around there going, okay, so for two weeks I have no control over my life. But the kids packed everything that they thought was necessary. They packed everything that they thought was important, everything that they thought they would need.

But they forgot what their dad would need. And I don't know. But, you know, it seems like this passage is talking about some of those things to us. It says that we go on these journeys and we carry stuff with us.

We carry things with us that become burdens. We carry guilt. We carry shame. We carry regret. We carry condemnation. We carry hurt. We carry bodies to sin.

And all of these things that we're carrying in this backpack or a suitcase or however you want to think about it, they just, they hinder our journey. And so we're in the book of Romans and we're going to look at the first 11 verses in Romans.

[5 : 10] Chapter 8 because we've been going through Romans. And what I want to look at in this passage here is I want to look at, Paul's going to talk about two types of journeys we're on. Two types of people.

There's only two types of journeys we take. Only two types of people, two types of mindsets. So I want to look at those two people. I want to look at the things that we bring with us in the journey.

And then I want to look at the things that we shouldn't bring.

And so two people, two journeys, the things we bring and the things we shouldn't bring. Does that make sense? So hopefully we'll kind of tie this all up in the end in a bow. Remember last week, if you were here, we finished up Romans chapter 7.

And in it, Paul, after going through his life and trying to figure out what does it mean for him to live? How should he live a life that's pleasing to God? How can he do it?

And you read in the passage that he used I, I, I, me, me, me. He used it over 30 times. And at the end of chapter 7, he cries out, who will set me free from the body of this death?

[6 : 11] I mean, he realized that his whole life, he's been trying to live the life on his own power. He's trying to focus on himself. And all of a sudden, this thought comes into his head.

And he goes, why am I focusing on myself on this journey? I should be focusing on Jesus. We're like that, aren't we?

And sometimes we go on these journeys and we become so tied up in ourselves and in our stuff and we just focus on our stuff and the next place we need to get. And we forget about the God who put us there and the God who's leading us and the God who's taking us.

We forget Christ. We leave him behind. We carry everything else with us. When I was growing up, I was trying to understand this idea of the Christian life.

And I know analogies are not perfect. But this is the way the guy explained it to me. He was discipling me. And I know we made fun of, what did we make fun of? Soccer the other day. But this is a pure sport.

[7 : 13] It's baseball. And the guy told me this. He said that when you're up there batting and baseball, so there's a ball and there's a bat and there's a pitcher and there's bases that you run around. And if you are focusing on just that first base, you want to get to that first base, and you're focusing on that first base, you're never going to get there.

The way that you get to first base is you focus on the ball. And if you focus on the ball, everything's going to work out okay in our life. And that's the way many of us are.

We focus on other things, and we're looking at the next step, and we're looking at how we're going to get there. But what Paul says is we need to focus on the person who's taking us there. Does that make sense? I mean, it's really simple, but, you know, I forget it all the time. I find myself going off and focusing on the next thing, but I'm not focusing on the person who's taking me there. I'm not focusing on Christ. And so I end up becoming frustrated because things aren't working the way that I want them to do. And Paul says in this passage here, he says from verses 4 on down, he says there are two types of people.

[8 : 21] There are two types of walks that we can take. There are two types of journeys. And so everybody here in Watermark today, you are only on one of two journeys. Paul's been making it really simple through Romans.

He doesn't give like ten choices. He says there's two choices, this or that, this or that, this or that. And he says in this passage, we're all here. We're either on one of two types of journeys. We're either one of two types of people.

And the first group of people he talks about are those people in verse 5, those in the flesh. He says they're walking, and the word walk in Greek means to order your life. And so it means that you're in the center and you've just kind of ordered your, it's like you go to a new desk and you order your desk around and you make sure that everything works.

You go to a new home and you order your home around so you know where everything is. He says those people who walk in the flesh, they order their lives around themselves. Their mindset is of the flesh.

The mindset, the word there means to focus. They focus on themselves. Now I don't know what you think of when you hear the word flesh because often what I think of is the body or I think of sex or I think of skin.

[9 : 27] But that's not what Paul is talking about here. When Paul uses the word flesh, it's even, it's huge. It means it's very difficult to interpret and translate in English.

Sometimes people say, what's the best translation? And you know, there's certain words that are just incredibly difficult to translate from Greek to English. Sometimes it takes like three sentences to get the idea. And this word flesh is one of these.

But basically what it means is that it's our nature. It's who we are. It's our desires. It's our passions. It's our self-centeredness. It's who we are apart from God.

It's who we are apart from spiritual things. It's us in the center of our world. And Paul says there are people on this journey and they put their self in the center of their world that their mind is focused on themselves.

The question he asks and we ask sometimes is what is our mind focused on? What do we intently think about? The passage says that whatever those things are, they're going to flash into your head.

[10 : 30] And if you're on the journey of the flesh, you're going to think about, ultimately, you're going to think about yourself. You're going to put yourself in the middle. You're going to think about what's going on there. And Paul in verse 7, he says that this will always lead to hostility with God.

The word there actually means like fighting and anger and war. And so the people who are on the journey, they of the flesh, they put themselves in the center of their journey, the center of their world. And he says in verse 6, if you do that, verse 7, you're always going to be at hostility with God. The word there is condemnation. We're going to talk about that a little later. And in verse 6, he says, if you walk in the flesh, you're ultimately going to lead to death. If you walk in the flesh, you're ultimately going to lead to death.

It's a spiritual death and it's a physical death. Fleshy people live independently of God. They depend upon themselves. They want control of their lives. Romans says that they're the people who want to save themselves.

They know what they need. They know how to get it. And the religion is Tobin. Or themselves. Those are the people on the journey of the flesh.

[11 : 46] One author said it this way that I thought was really interesting. He said, your religion is what you do with your free time. Your religion is what you do with your free time.

Whatever your mind goes to naturally, whatever your mind goes to freely, this is what you really live for. Whatever your mind goes to naturally, whatever your mind goes to freely, when you're not inundated by a billion things, whatever your mind goes to, this is what you really live for.

This is what shapes your journey. This is what causes you to put the bag and the stuff into your bag. You can carry it with you. This is what your mind is set upon. What is your mind? So one of the questions we have to ask ourselves is, what is our mind set upon?

What preoccupies you? When you have free time, what pops into your head? What are the things that keep going over and over and over and you're worried about?

What are those things that preoccupy your mind? And Paul says, whatever those things are, you are a flesh person. Your mind is set on the flesh and you're journeying with you in the center of your world.

[12:59] And ultimately, you're always going to come in conflict with God and you're going to end up getting in trouble. So what is it that we focused on? Paul says there's a second person, a second journey, a second people going on this journey, a second mindset, and it begins in verse 9.

You can look at it. He's talking to Christians. Remember, he's been talking to Christians in Romans. He says, however, you're not in the flesh, but you're in the spirit. If, and the word there means since, since indeed the spirit of God dwells in you.

But if anyone doesn't have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to God. These people he calls, these are the people who are on the spiritual journey.

Their mindset is on the spirit. The word there again is, the spirit actually just means God. Their mindset is on God. God is at the center of their world and they've ordered their life around God and his word.

And those are the people on the spiritual journey. Remember, there's only two types, fleshy, spiritual, self, God. Now, the spiritual person, and I've struggled with this for a long time trying to figure out what does a spiritual person look like?

[14:09] Because I grew up in a church where you had super spiritual people. I mean, they were just the people who quoted Bible every time they talked and their head was in the sky and they tripped over things and they were just too worried about thinking God thoughts instead of thinking people thoughts.

And they were too busy reading their Bible and praying to be engaged with people. And that's not what Paul is talking about at all. That's not a spiritual person.

I mean, if that's true, then the Pharisees were the most spiritual people in the New Testament. And the Pharisees were the people that Jesus went after over and over and over because they were whitewashed tombs.

Outwardly they looked perfect, but inwardly they were dead. And what Paul says here is to have your mind focused on God, to be spiritual means just to think of Him.

To think of grace. To think of the cross. To think of community. To think of His creation. To think of people made in His image.

[15:20] I mean, to have your mind set on the Spirit, it just means to live in a way that you want to honor God. Live in a way that you want to honor God. Live in a way that you want to make God's name great.

Whose name do you make great? I mean, my experience in my life, and I'm just talking for Tobin, is that either I'm making God great, or I'm trying to make myself great.

Who are you trying to make great today? What does it mean for you to walk with the Lord? Now, what does this look like at work? Well, it might look like different things for different people, but I think what it really means is just this.

You're walking into your work, and you just have this thought come into your mind. Okay, God, you put me here. You've given me gifts. You've given me talents. How can I make your name great today? How can I honor you?

It might mean you just say, God, I want to honor you today. Show me how to do that. Show me how I can obey you. It's not this huge thing where you say, great job, and you go, praise the Lord.

[16:33] God made me do it, and God is all great. It might mean you just say, I had a great team around me. And you're taking the focus off of yourself, which fleshy people do.

And you're putting your focus on other things. So what does it look like for us on this journey? What? And everybody's really quiet here.

Because I have to ask myself this all the time, guys. What journey are we on? are we living for ourselves let's be honest are we living for christ and paul says in this passage that there's only two journeys there's not a third journey there's not a journey for super spiritual person and then for

non-spiritual people he basically just says you're either walking in the flesh or you're walking in the spirit and there's just no dividing those things that's the journey the next thing that paul says in this passage is this he says no matter which journey you're on no matter whether you're walking in the flesh or whether you're walking in the spirit everyone everyone is going to struggle with two things in our lives we're going to struggle with the idea of being condemned and unworthy before a holy god and we're going to struggle with the reality of sin which indwells in us and we struggle with that thing and paul talked about that we're going to struggle with the idea of coming before the lord that's a holy god and realizing we're not holy and that we're condemned and we're going to struggle with the idea that we walk around and we do the things that we don't want to do paul says everyone's going to struggle with that the spiritual people the people on a spiritual journey they're going to struggle with that right now here and now the people who are of the flesh we're told that they're going to struggle with that later when they come before the lord but if you're spiritual and you're on that journey you know what i'm talking about i mean you know that the minute you fail it the minute you um i i think of sin is when we love something more than we love god and the minute you love something or someone more than you love god the bible says that we sin and all of a sudden this little voice comes in the back of my head and it says things like wow when you call yourself a christian wow you're a pastor and you did that you must not be a very good pastor or you must not be a very good christian sometimes there's a big voice and i make a mistake or we make a mistake in front of people instead of that voice in our head talking sometimes there's people around us and they say man shame on you how could you do that i can't believe you did that you know in this chapter here paul has the best news for us he has the best news for those of us on a spiritual journey look at verse 4 1 look at what he says and we're going to walk our way through it and then i'm going to give you some application points number one verse 1 therefore therefore remember all the things we've talked about before remember all the things we've talked about in romans remember jesus remember the cross remember making being made right remember justification remember grace therefore remember everything that's come before remember that there is now it hasn't always been this way it's just this way now since we gave our life to christ there is now we've changed our journeys we're living differently we're going on a different journey there is now no in greek it would be sound no i mean it was the strongest word you could use and we again we can't translate that in english it was actually at the beginning of the sentence so it had this incredible amount of strength that meant it's not possible there's no way not at all not one not a chance there's no way therefore there is now no condemnation it's a legal term it basically means in law terms it means to be pronounced guilty and then have your sentence taken out i think i scared her when i yelled no condemnation condemnation there's actually two greek words together the greek words mean down and judge

so literally in greek the condemnation word means to judge down and so the idea was this caesar's sitting on his throne and all the prisoners came in before him or all the people with the different cases and problems came in before him and he heard their cases and caesar after hearing their cases above them he either judged up or he judged down he either said judged up great or he either condemned them so this is the word there is therefore now no condemnation for those of us who are in christ jesus remember we've been talking and romans says that you and i deserve to be condemned there's nothing good within us we've done nothing to deserve god's gift none of us are righteous not one all of us are broken romans 3 and what he says here is that yes you deserve to be judged down but god sent his son god sent his son in the likeness of our flesh verse 3 it means that he was just like us but without sin god sent his son verse 4 so that he could fulfill all the requirements of the law what's the requirement of the law obedience perfection and the passage says that you and i cannot do it because we have this sinful nature in us we have this indwelling sin and this thing that was meant to be good this law that was meant to save us we were meant to give it and say okay now i know what god's like now i know how to walk with god when we got this law the sin in us came out and it made us even worse you ever had that experience you're driving on the highway you see the sign that says 40 miles an hour and you know wow this is the longest stretch in hong kong you should at least be able to go 60 miles an hour on this only 40 miles an hour that's terrible and this law that was good comes into you in our sinfulness makes us disobeyed now if you ever repeat this i'm going to deny it totally but the way i first saw this in my life was or in somebody's life we used to go to the beach on the summers we used to go to to grand bay and fort morgan and there was this brand new and at that time there was nothing just beach houses just so people lived on the beaches or we slept on the beach and all of a sudden this really nice hotel got

built in it and it was right on the waterfront it was incredible and so we went down there for a year and we vacationed with my friends it was really really good and stayed there we'd go out and play the next summer we came back you know what we walked into the same room and there was a sign it said do not fish off of this balcony you know i never thought about fishing that way before i never thought wow what a great thing we could turn the air conditioning on we could just throw our poles out there when it was right in the water we can go fishing i never thought about that how dumb am i but this sign this sign just kind of made me do it all of a sudden we get this knocking at the door they said excuse me but people are eating down on the second floor and they see these fish

being pulled up up the windows can you please stop that it's not my fault the sign i've been here before i would have never done that but the sign made me do it that's what paul's saying here you know what happened the next year we came back we came back next year guess what happened there was no sign they took him out of the rooms because i knew if they put the sign there people are going to fish but they don't put the sign there people aren't going to even think about that and what paul is saying here is that on this journey we're going to struggle with this thing called the law because we are sinful but god brings his son and his son fulfills everything so that when god sees us he judges up in the passage says he judges up because he judged jesus down he judges up we're not condemned but he judges down you know the problem with being on a spiritual journey we forget that we struggle with that we want to please the lord we want to do the right thing but we forget it and verse 11 says and so that you don't forget it i've given you my spirit and this spirit is going to be inside of you it's going to dwell in you and so the spirit is going to talk to you and know that you're my child don't forget that you're not condemned don't forget that you're judged up don't ever think of yourself judged down but the passage says on this journey we forget that and we struggle with that and like the video we carry these big bags full of shame and guilt and hurt and Paul is yelling at us no no no followers of Christ because all those things have been taken away some of us are going to leave here today and the minute we walk out that door we're going to have all these thoughts enter into our head and they're going to be thoughts like this because these thoughts are going to come from an enemy and this enemy doesn't want you to walk the way that God wants you to walk he doesn't want you to walk in the spirit and freedom he wants you to be in bondage he wants you to be in condemnation and the thoughts are going to be something like this we're going to find ourselves not living the way we expect ourselves to live we're going to look at other people around us and this voice is going to say to us man look at them they got their life together man look at them they got their family together man how come you're not a Christian like them and all of a sudden you're going to feel guilt and shame and frustration and what does Paul say?

[28 : 12] verse 1 what's he say? there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus some of us are going to walk out of here and we're going to start thinking that God must be really angry with me because things aren't going the way that I expect him to do I haven't gotten married yet or my kids are crazy or I haven't had kids yet or my husband or my wife is not understanding me or my job is terrible or my boss is and God must be really, really angry with me he's getting at me because of all the past failures I had he's punishing me because all the mistakes I've made and all the times I've blown it I don't know if you have those voices come in but I have those voices come in what does Paul say?

oh come on guys this is the second time what does he say? well I didn't hear that what? okay that's okay some of us are going to walk out of here and we're feeling like we're a failure our relationships are falling apart no one really cares about us the people that we thought were our friends have stabbed us in the back they've destroyed our reputation we feel totally unworthy we feel like we deserve it maybe we picked the wrong friends maybe we weren't good enough maybe we just didn't trust God enough and what's Paul say?

you gotta get this down because you're gonna walk out there and it's gonna happen there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus no, none, not ever you're not ever judged down you're always judged up why aren't we ever judged down?

because Jesus was judged down don't ever forget that Jesus was judged down for you so that when God looks at us He can judge us some of us are gonna walk out of here and we are gonna have somebody we care about deeply we're gonna have somebody that we love incredibly it might be a good friend it might be a spouse it might be our parents and they're gonna look at us and say

you are a failure didn't I tell you this was gonna happen?

I can't believe you're such a disobedient kid I can't believe you don't care about me more than you should I can't believe you missed this birthday or this vacation I can't believe you did this you are worthless you're worthless what's Paul saying?

[31 : 07] you guys are getting it kind of right? there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus some of us grew up in religious homes or religious schools and growing up in these religious homes and these religious schools caused us to carry an incredible amount of shame guilt conviction about ourselves about our families about things we've done the things we shouldn't have done and we walk around always in guilt and we hear messages like today and we go yeah sure not for me God would never say that for me I'm a bad person what's Paul saying?

there's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus finally some of us are scarred beyond recognition we've had terrible bosses terrible relationships terrible friends and our self image is about this small and when we think of things we should do the first thought comes in our mind that will never work because you're not worthy you failed before why do you think we'll succeed this time?

everyone knows what you're really like no one wants to be around you that's why people don't call you anymore what does Paul say? very good there's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus the passage says this guys the passage says that no matter how much condemnation we feel no matter how much struggle we deal with as Christians as people on the spiritual journey as people taking the journey with these backpacks and things are being pushing our backs no matter how bad we feel no matter if the condemnation is inwardly no matter if the condemnation is outwardly no matter how strong we feel no matter how strong we feel like sin has a hold on us it doesn't have a hold on us no matter how shameful we feel no matter how much sin has paralyzed us fear doubt guilt God knows it all God knows it all and he put it on Jesus on a cross and he judged him down so he can look at us and judge us up does that make sense as you go on this journey you have to remember these things and the question is as we carry these things as we pick up new bricks as we add bricks to us and take bricks off we need to ask ourselves the questions over and over are we going to surrender this to God are we going to give this to God do we know that God has already given this do we know that God has judged us up or do we think that God has kind of judged us this way and if we think God has kind of judged us this way what we've done is we've separated ourselves from the gospel the gospel is like a train

Jesus the Holy Spirit is like this engine and we come alongside and we click up but the minute we allow condemnation to come into our life that click is broken we've de-gospelled ourselves I don't know I make up words all the time but we've de-gospelled ourselves that's what condemnation does condemnation comes in and it de-gospels us and Paul says don't allow it to happen it's going to happen you're going to be tempted you're going to walk out here and you're going to feel these thoughts it's going to be from your spouse or your friends or yourself and it's going to look at this past track record and you're going to say I'm going to feel these things you're right and I'm going to have pity and the minute we do that we've lost the power of God in our life we've lost the power of the gospel I'm going to end with just two thoughts three thoughts four thoughts first thought on this passage as I read this and I've been praying for this in our church over and over I think that some of us in here need to be honest some of us need to be honest what kind of journey we're on some of us need to be honest are we on the journey of the flesh or are we on the journey of the spirit I mean some of us we prayed the prayer we accepted Christ yeah we're going to heaven but our lives have no change whatsoever if people were to look at us they would say well we're the center of our world we've put ourself in the middle we've ordered everything around us some of us need to be honest with that and we just say you know I thought I was doing that but you know I realize it I don't even know what it means to have a relationship with God maybe this is the time we need to come clean and ask people what that looks like some of us we've been walking in so much shame and so much guilt and we just and we accepted Christ in our life but we just feel worthless and some of us need to wake up and say hey I should say stop playing God you're not God there's only one God and he's forgiven you accept it move on walk the life love him be empowered by his spirit all of us in here need to become honest and we need to come clean and say what journey are we on stop playing around life is too short for those of us in here who are not in Christ for those of us who say yeah you know

[36 : 19] I'm in the flesh I'm not in Christ my prayer is you need to consider this you are carrying this huge load of baggage and you're carrying these things that are ultimately going to consume you condemn you and destroy you my question for you who've been on this journey of the flesh are you sure you want to do that because there's a God who loves you incredibly and he's giving you his son so that you don't have to be condemned he's giving you his son so you don't have to carry the baggage he's giving you his son so that he can judge you up and not down will you do that and there's some of us in here who are on this spiritual journey but you know we just don't check our bags very often and we're carrying all this can I say it in church crap and some of the things are going to kill us you know when we did this exercise of opening up the bags last year

Christina opened up KK's bag our seven year old and she had actually had broken glass that she was carrying in the bag broken glass some of it fell out on the floor Christina didn't see it and she stepped on it and she sliced her foot open that wide and she had to go to the hospital get stitches some of us are carrying broken glass and things are going to hurt us in our bag as followers of Christ because we don't check our bag and we don't realize what's in there and for some of us we need to check our bags and have people around us check our bags and ask us do we understand the gospel are we gospeled up or are we de-gospeled because we're on this journey and we're carrying things in us that we don't need to be carrying and they're going to destroy us but condemnation embodies the sin one last thought as we've been teaching Romans one of the things we've been trying to get to you over and over and over

Christianity is so much different than every other religion I mean some of the values are the same some of the morals are the same you find in philosophy classes you go to philosophy but the difference in Christianity is this in Christianity it's God who always acts and you and I respond God acts we respond Paul's sermons and talks are always that way this is what God has done for you this is what you need to do God acts you respond God acts you respond God acts you respond every other religion every other philosophy says this you do this then God will do this you be this way and God will be this way you do these things and God will do these things to you and Christianity says that's not true Christianity is about God pursuing you do you know how much God loves you do you know how crazy

God is for you in the 90s I was teaching English in China it was very interesting I'll never forget it we were in class and we had this discussion and the discussion was about the value of humans and I was very careful about what I was going to say and I was listening and listening to my students and listening to what they're saying and also one of the students raised his hand he said I think that we in China value people so much less than you in the West I'm like well explain he goes well this airplane just crashed and CAA C used to we were living in China with CAA C China Airways always cancels or China Airways always crashes so they changed their name I don't know what they call them now but they didn't want to have CAA C and the

CAA airplane had just crashed and 100 and something people lost their lives and the student said to me you know when people die in China like an airplane crash we give them a thousand US dollars that's how much a person is worth 1,000 US dollars in China but when an airplane crashes in America you guys or in the west you give them like half a million dollars it's clear to me that you value life and people so much more than we do how much does God value you what did God pay for you you know I don't think we realize that sometimes I think if we thought about that more we allowed that to permeate into our hearts and our souls it would change everything that we do it would change everything because God loved us so much he gave us so we might be judged up because he was judged down we're on a journey we have choices to make what journey are you going to be on what kind of love you are you going to carry all that determines your outcome and where you end up

[42 : 18] God loves you so much dedicated son our prayer is that we are a church that thinks about that often and that changes us in everything we do father we thank you for this day we thank you for your mercy we thank you for your grace we thank you for your word we thank you for your son who came like we were but without sin you paid the penalty that we could never pay because you love us so much I pray for us I pray today before we leave we would make a decision and be honest and come clean what journey are we on are we on the journey of the flesh are we on the journey of the spirit are we on a journey where you're at the center of our lives are we on a journey where we're at the center of our lives and realizing it's never too late to change and to turn because you love us so much and you're the god of second chances father I pray for those of us who are

walking in the spirit on this journey who have guilt and shame and pain and hurt all these things that cloud our lives and make us forget who we are and whose we are what journey we're on

I pray for us lord I pray that we would have people around us who love us enough to wake us up I pray that we'd always be a church that would speak the truth of your word and not flower coat things that make people feel good about themselves but realize that we're we're we're condemned but for some reason you judge us up because you condemned your son father I pray we'd be a church that would help each other understand the gospel and stop carrying this luggage and baggage in our lives it's killing us destroying us it's not allowing us to be the people that you've called us to be help us to understand your mercy and help us to understand your grace lord most of all I pray that we would be a church I pray that we would be a church that never forgot what it was like before we knew you I pray that we would be a people who never forgot what it was like to walk in the flesh and to surround their world with just themselves and things that mattered for them and how empty that felt and how lonely that felt and how guilty that felt and how we had to try to reinvent things just to hide those shame and all those other things help us never to forget what it was like before you brought your son Jesus into our life and as we leave here today realize that 95% of the people that we're going to run into in Hong Kong are walking that journey of the flesh and they're hurting they're desperate they're looking for something to numb their lives and their purpose and their meaning help us to realize and keep our eye focused on you and what you're doing and be a part of what you're doing instead of our own agenda may we be a people who share your son with everybody because we want them on the journey with us father we love you we need you we pray in your son

Jesus name amen