

Dead Church Podcast Notes

Acts Initiative

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Ep. 7 – Lies Christians Believe About Condemnation

As we talk about faith, repentance, obedience, and the importance of works, many Christians will object that this is unbiblical. Most Christians have been taught their whole lives that works are not required for salvation – so, if someone says that works are required, they often oppose this position.

The biggest objection is the topic of legalism. We looked at that in the last video.

The second objection is the idea of condemnation.

When talking about the necessity of obedience, Christians typically say, “This makes me feel condemned. This gives me condemnation.”

What do they mean when they say this?

Typically, what they mean is, “This makes me feel guilty. This makes me feel bad and guilty because I look at my life and I see that I’m not obeying, and I see times that I fail to obey, and then I feel condemned.”

Christians typically respond to the feeling of condemnation by saying, “I need to remember that I’m forgiven! I need to remember that I have forgiveness! If I focus on things I’m supposed to be doing, I feel guilty and forget that I’m forgiven!”

This objection holds a lot of Christians back from ever growing.

This video is going to sound a little harsh. My intention is not to offend anyone or upset anyone. My intention is to challenge your current beliefs. If you are believing the wrong thing, and responding the wrong way, your eternal salvation may be on the line. To me, that is no trivial matter. The things in this video (and the rest of this series) are matters of life and death, so I will not mince my words, and I will not sugar-coat it. You must know the truth, and you must be told if you are believing lies. If this video upsets you, offends you, or challenges what you believe, I simply ask you to go to Scripture yourself to determine what is true and what is false.

When discussing condemnation, one of the first verses to look at is in the book of 1 John. The book of 1 John is essential for our understanding of what true Christianity is, because John wrote this letter to address false Christianity that began spreading in the latter half of the first century. He was addressing the fact that people were teaching lies and teaching a false Christianity. So, he wrote his letter to establish what is real and what is not – what a real Christian looks like, and what a false Christian looks like. And, in doing this, one of the issues he addressed is condemnation:

“By this we will know that we belong to the truth. If our hearts condemn us, our hearts can be reassured before him. God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”¹

This is a verse a lot of Christians misunderstand. They think this verse means that whenever they feel condemned about their disobedience or sin, they need to just remember that they have peace with God.

¹ 1 John 3:19-20

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I heard a sermon once – over a decade ago – and it stuck with me. The man preached from this verse, saying, “When it says that God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything, that could be something that makes us feel even more condemned – because we tend to think of all the sin in our lives. But really, it means that God remembers the gospel. He remembers everything – he remembers that you are saved by Jesus. That is what you need to remember. When your heart condemns you, you have peace with God, because God remembers everything, including your forgiveness – he doesn’t just remember your sin.”

When I first heard that sermon, it really encouraged me because I was at a time in my life where I felt condemned all the time. I looked at my life, and I knew I wasn’t doing what the Bible said to do. I felt guilty. I felt the weight of my disobedience. I saw my sin, and I knew I wasn’t obeying God. When I felt this guilt, I would remember this verse and this sermon. I would remember that I had peace with God. I would remember that God remembers more than just my sin – he remembers the gospel. He remembers that I’m forgiven – even when I fail to remember.

But this isn’t what this verse meant. This is false teaching.

This verse is being plucked completely out of context and is forced to fit the theology preached by the Church today – the theology that we are saved by grace alone, by belief alone, and that works are not required. They take individual verses (like this one) out of context to make them sound like they say we’re saved by believing, and that our obedience is not essential for our salvation. They distort the Scriptures to make it sound like obedience is not required.

But that’s not what the apostles taught. That’s not what Scripture says. We are not saved by belief – we’re saved by *pístis* – fidelity, loyalty, faithfulness, and reliability. If you have belief, but you don’t obey, then you’re unfaithful – you don’t have *pístis*, and therefore, you don’t have salvation or forgiveness! If you don’t have *pístis*, then you’re unfaithful – you’re an adulterer – you’re an unfaithful bride to the bridegroom.

Christian teachers teach that this verse means that when you see sin in your life, you must remember the gospel, and you must remember that you’re forgiven. But that’s not what this verse is saying. That’s the opposite of what it’s saying.

Look at the context!

Earlier in the same chapter, John said, “...anyone who abides in Christ does not go on sinning. Anyone who goes on sinning has neither seen him nor known him. Dear children, do not let anyone deceive you. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. Anyone who continues to sin belongs to the devil...Those who are God’s children do not continue sinning... In this way it is apparent who God’s children are and who the devil’s children are: Those who do not do what is right are not God’s children, and those who do not love their brothers and sisters are not God’s children.”²

He said, “We know we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers and sisters. Whoever does not love is still dead.”³

So, John clearly taught that true Christians do not continue living in sin. Their lives change. They stop living in sin, and they start living in righteousness. Anyone who continues in sin isn’t a Christian – which means they don’t have forgiveness! Those who do not do what is right are not God’s children – they are children of the devil. God’s children will love one another.

Then John said, “This is how we know what real love is: Jesus laid down his life for us. So we should lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. Suppose someone has the world’s possessions and sees a brother or sister in need, but does not help. Then God’s love is not living in that person. My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by showing true love through

² 1 John 3:8-10

³ 1 John 3:14

our actions. By this we will know that we belong to the truth. If our hearts condemn us, our hearts can be reassured before him. God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”⁴

According to John, real love is not a feeling. Real love is not just expressed in words. Real love is not some affection you have in your heart. Real love is action. If you see someone in need, and you have the means to help, but you don’t help, then God’s love doesn’t live in you. This is the kind of love true Christians will have for their brothers and sisters – a kind of love that helps others – that puts their interests first. Or, as we saw in the last video – “good deeds to meet urgent needs.”⁵

This is the context. John told his audience that true Christians will live a life defined by love – doing good deeds and meeting urgent needs. Then he said, “By this we will know that we belong to the truth.”

By what?

By loving one another through action. By having good works. By doing what is right. By meeting the needs of the brothers and sisters.

By living this way, we can know that we belong to the truth.

Why?

Because as John just said, “the one who does what is right is righteous...”⁶ and “In this way it is apparent who God’s children are and who the devil’s children are: Those who do not do what is right are not God’s children, and those who do not love their brothers and sisters are not God’s children.”⁷

By showing true love, where we lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters, just as Christ laid down his life for us, we can know that we belong to the truth, because that’s what real Christians do – that’s what God’s children do.

And *then* if our hearts condemn us, we can have peace with God because God knows everything. We can have peace with God only if we’re obeying him. John didn’t say we can have peace with God despite our disobedience. He said our hearts can be reassured and we can have peace with God if we obey him and live in love.

John was saying, “If you are following the way of truth, living in love, and obeying the commands of God, then if your heart still tries to condemn you, you can have peace with God. You can have reassurance before God. God knows everything! He knows that you are faithful to him!”

John was not saying that you can be reassured before God if you’re disobeying him. He was not saying that you just need to remember that you’re forgiven even when you disobey. No – he was saying that you can have assurance before God by living in love. If you live in true, biblical, radical love, then if your heart condemns you, you can have peace with God.

He was not trying to give you assurance before God if you’re still living in sin. He was saying that you can be reassured before God if you are obeying him.

He made this even more clear as he continued:

“If our hearts condemn us, our hearts can be reassured before him. God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God. And we receive from him what we ask for *because we obey his commands and do what pleases him*. This is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love each other, just as he commanded. *The people who obey God’s commands abide in God, and God abides in them.*”⁸

If our hearts do not condemn us, and we have boldness before God, then we will receive what

⁴ 1 John 3:16-20

⁵ Ref. Titus 3:14

⁶ 1 John 3:7

⁷ 1 John 3:10

⁸ 1 John 3:21-24, emphasis added

we ask for. Why? Because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. The people who obey God are the ones who abide in God.

Christians take one tiny little verse completely out of context to make it say the exact opposite of what it actually says! John was clear both before and after this verse that he was talking about those who *obey* God. He was not trying to give reassurance to those who continue to disobey God.

If your life is marked by faithfulness to God, where you give your entire life to obey God, then you can have reassurance before God. If your life is marked by love – true love as defined by John – then you can have reassurance before God. If you’re living that way and your heart begins to condemn you, then you can have peace with God. Your heart is lying to you. You can know that God sees your faithfulness.

John was not saying that you can have assurance before God even if you disobey him and ignore the needs of the brothers and sisters around you. He was not telling you to just remember that you’re forgiven as you continue blatantly ignoring the commands of God. He wasn’t saying you have peace with God, even if you continue in sin. No – he said true Christians don’t continue in sin. He said if you’re disobeying God and ignoring the needs of the brothers and sisters, you’re not a child of God – you’re a child of the devil! His whole point in this chapter was that true Christians will obey God! His whole point was that you must obey!

But the Church today ignores the point of what John was saying, and they look for what will make them feel better. They preach the opposite of John’s point. They preach that it’s possible to have forgiveness even when you continue to disobey God. They teach that if you disobey God and feel guilty, you just need to remember that you’re forgiven. That’s not biblical. That’s not what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches that if you’re going through life, disobeying the commands of God, you’re not forgiven. You feel guilty because part of the job of the Holy Spirit is to convict people about sin.⁹ The Holy Spirit convicts people about sin, and that makes them feel guilty – because they are guilty!

According to Scripture, if you feel condemned because you’re not obeying the commands of Jesus, it is because you *are* condemned. You’re guilty! You are living in rebellion, disobeying God, following your father – the devil!

That is harsh, and most people don’t want to hear it. So, they turn to teachers who tickle their ears and tell them the things they want to hear. Paul warned us, “...the time will come when people will not put up with the true teaching but will find many more teachers who please them by saying the things they want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and will begin to follow false stories.”¹⁰

Paul warned us that the time would come when people would turn away from the truth because they want to hear something different.

What do people want to hear?

People want to hear, “Remember that you’re forgiven. Remember that you’re forgiven. You have to just get it into your head that you’re forgiven! God remembers that you’re forgiven – you have to remember it, too!”

No. You have to get it into your head that you must obey Jesus. You have to get it into your head that you’re saved by fidelity to him – not just by believing. You’re saved by dying with him and leaving behind your old ways. You’re saved by rising with him into a new life where you live righteously because you follow the Spirit.

This brings us to the second verse people use when talking about condemnation:

⁹ Ref. John 16:8-11

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 4:3-4

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”¹¹

Christians are quick to point to this verse whenever they start feeling guilty about their sin. If they see that they’re not doing the things the Bible says to do, and if they start to feel guilty about it, they quickly quote this verse to remind themselves that they are not condemned.

But there’s a problem: This isn’t what the verse said in the original Greek. In the original Greek, there is an entire phrase that has been removed from our English Bibles.

In the original Greek, it said, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”¹²

Paul did not say, “There’s no condemnation for everyone who calls themselves a Christian.” He didn’t say, “There’s no condemnation for those who say they believe in Jesus.” And he didn’t say, “There is no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus, but continue sinning.”

No. He said, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

In other words, there is no condemnation for those whose actions have changed – who no longer live their old lives, but instead live the new life – the life led by the Spirit – a life marked by righteousness. That’s what this verse said in the Greek. That’s what Paul actually wrote. The phrase is removed in most translations because Paul repeated the phrase a few sentences later, in verse four. Translators arbitrarily decided it must be a mistake to have the phrase written twice. But the phrase is included in the overwhelming majority of manuscripts available to us. The translators had no business removing it from the Bible.

Furthermore, if you read Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8 as one cohesive message, it’s clear this is what Paul was teaching: Those who are joined to Jesus have died with him and have risen into a new life, where they are no longer slaves of sin.¹³ Through Jesus, they died to the Law, and now they bear fruit for God by following the Spirit, whereas the Law had only stirred up sin within them.¹⁴ But now, in Christ Jesus, they no longer follow their flesh, they follow the Spirit – and so, they are children of God.¹⁵

There is no condemnation for those who walk according to the Spirit.

Why?

Because, as Paul explained to the Galatians, “walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”¹⁶ If you walk by the Spirit, you won’t gratify the desires of the flesh – you won’t do what your flesh wants. In other words, if you walk by the Spirit, you won’t continue in sin – your actions will change – you will do what God says is right! You will become his child, inherit his nature, and live as he lives. Therefore, there’s no condemnation! You’re not guilty! You can be without fear on the day of judgment, because in this world you were like him!¹⁷

Even if you’re not convinced that there’s a phrase missing in the Bible, the English version still says there is no condemnation “for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

As John said, “anyone who abides in Christ does not go on sinning. Anyone who goes on sinning has neither seen him nor known him.”¹⁸

According to John, who are the people who are in Christ Jesus?

¹¹ Romans 8:1

¹² Romans 8:1 (translated here directly from the Greek text as found in The Interlinear Bible, 2nd Edition, Jay P. Green, Sr., 1986)

¹³ Ref. Romans 6

¹⁴ Ref. Romans 7

¹⁵ Ref. Romans 8:1-17

¹⁶ Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁷ Ref. 1 John 4:17

¹⁸ 1 John 3:6

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This gets back to what the entire book of 1 John is about – true Christians are people who obey. True Christians do not continue to disobey the commands of God. True Christians do not continue to disobey the things Jesus taught. True Christians live their lives completely for Jesus – obeying him and finding every possible way to do what he wants.

“There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” because “anyone who abides in Christ does not go on sinning.”

It’s not, “there is no condemnation because you need to remember that you are forgiven, even though you keep on sinning.” No – because those who keep on sinning are children of the devil. No one who continues sinning is a child of God!¹⁹

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus – who do not continue sinning! They live for God and they love their brothers and sisters. They love with a true biblical love (which we will look at in more detail in a later video). They love with a deep, powerful love that changes their lives – it changes the way they think about everything.

There is no condemnation for those people.

Condemnation is about whether you will be found guilty on judgment day. As we mentioned in the last video, John said that on judgment day, the books will be opened, and people will be judged by what they did.²⁰ He said we can have no fear on judgment day because in this life we are like Jesus.²¹ There is no condemnation for those who are like Jesus in this life. There is no condemnation for those who are clothed in righteousness – the righteous deeds of the saints.²²

If we keep going through life, disobeying the commands of Jesus, and we feel condemned, it is because we are condemned.

The majority of people who “struggle with condemnation” are struggling because they are condemned! They’re guilty! They love this life. They love this world. They love pleasure. They love comfort. They love the things this life is offering them too much to obey Jesus. Or, they’re too busy with the things of this life to obey Jesus. Or, they’re too distracted with the things of this life to obey Jesus. Or, they want something that this world or this life is offering them too much to obey Jesus. Or, they don’t want to let go of their comfort in order to obey Jesus.

But, they don’t want to go to hell.

They feel condemned because they recognize that they’re not doing the things Jesus said to do. They feel condemned because they are condemned. That’s the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

But instead of listening and following the Spirit, they quench the Spirit.²³ They quench the Spirit by telling themselves over and over that they are forgiven. They quench the Spirit by reminding themselves of the false gospel they received from men. They quench the Spirit by listening to the false stories of preachers who tickle their ears, giving them false hope and good feelings. They quench the Spirit by telling themselves, “I’m saved by faith, and not by works.”²⁴ But they ignore the fact that James said, “You’re saved by works, and not by faith.”²⁵ They don’t even recognize that, according to their theology, these two verses contradict one another.

They keep telling themselves that they’re forgiven. They keep telling themselves that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... but they’re not in Christ Jesus! John said, “the people who obey God’s commands abide in God, and God abides in them.”²⁶

¹⁹ Ref. 1 John 3:6-10; 5:18

²⁰ Ref. Revelation 20:12-13

²¹ Ref. 1 John 4:17

²² Ref. Revelation 19:8

²³ Ref. 1 Thessalonians 5:19

²⁴ Ref. Ephesians 2:8-9

²⁵ Ref. James 2:24

²⁶ 1 John 3:24

According to John, you're in Christ Jesus if you're obeying God – doing what he said to do.

John also said, “As for you be sure you abide in the teaching you heard from the beginning. If you abide in what you heard from the beginning, you will also abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which he himself promised to us – eternal life.”²⁷

According to John, you're only in Christ Jesus if you're abiding in what was taught from the beginning. You only have the promise of eternal life if you're abiding in the Son and in the Father – and you're only abiding in them if you're abiding in what was taught from the beginning.

What was taught from the beginning?

Believe in Jesus?

Trust him?

Have faith?

No. John told us what was taught from the beginning: “This is the teaching you have heard from the beginning: We must love each other.”²⁸

Immediately after saying this, John explained what real love is (in the verse we read earlier). Real love is not a feeling. It isn't expressed in words. It isn't just *being kind*. Real love is when you lay down your entire life. It's when you help those in need.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But too many people are going through life, thinking they are in Christ Jesus despite the fact that they don't obey him.

The Bible says so plainly, so clearly, and so many times, that you are not in Christ Jesus if you do not obey him.²⁹

Jesus said, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but do not do what I say?”³⁰

He said on judgment day, many will say, “Lord, Lord,” and he will say, “Depart from me, you who practice unrighteousness.”³¹

So many people think he is their Lord. They think they are in Christ Jesus. They think they are forgiven. And their preachers tell them to remind themselves of these “facts”. But they're not facts; they're lies. Because if you don't obey him, you're not forgiven.

The first step in accepting Jesus is repentance – you change the way you live.³² When God shows you sin in your life, you must repent. That doesn't just mean you stop sinning. Repentance doesn't just mean you stop doing the bad things. It means you start doing something different – you start doing the right things.

You must start obeying what Jesus taught.

John the Baptist preached repentance.³³ He told people to change the way they live. His message was not just that people should stop sinning – but that they should start doing what is right.³⁴ But Scripture adds something about repentance that often goes unnoticed. It says, “He went all over the country around the Jordan River preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”³⁵

John was preaching repentance – for the forgiveness of sin.

²⁷ 1 John 2:24-25

²⁸ 1 John 3:11

²⁹ Ref. Matthew 7:15-27, 12:48-50; 21:43, 24:45-51, 25:31-46; Luke 6:46-49, 8:21, 11:28, 12:42-46, 14:33; John 5:29, 8:31-32, 12:47-49; Acts 26:19-20; Romans 3:31, 6:1-8:17, 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:13-17, 6:7-10; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Titus 1:16, 2:11-14, 3:8, 3:14; Hebrews 10:24, 10:32-39, 11:1-40, 12:14-17; James 1:22-27, 2:14-26, 3:13, 4:3-5; 1 Peter 2:11-12, 3:9-14; 1 John 1:5-7, 2:3-6, 2:9-11, 2:15-17, 2:24-26, 2:29, 3:4-10, 3:16-24, 4:8, 4:19-21, 5:2-5, 5:18... and many more.

³⁰ Luke 6:46

³¹ Ref. Matthew 7:21-23

³² Ref. Acts 2:38

³³ Ref. Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 19:4

³⁴ Ref. Luke 3:11

³⁵ Luke 3:3

His job was to prepare the way of the Lord – to get people to repent, to change the way they were living so they would be ready to follow Jesus.³⁶ But it says that their repentance resulted in forgiveness! It wasn't belief for forgiveness of sins. It wasn't faith for forgiveness of sins. It wasn't Jesus' death on the cross for forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins comes through repentance.

Furthermore, this wasn't something that changed after Jesus died. Some people might say, "well, John the Baptist was technically still in the Old Covenant, because Jesus hadn't died yet." Sure! But after Jesus rose from the dead, he said the same thing!

"Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He said to them, 'It is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations, starting at Jerusalem.'"³⁷

According to Jesus, people receive forgiveness of sins through repentance! Not only that, but according to Jesus, this is the message that would be preached to all the nations... which is why Paul summarized his message by saying, "I began telling people that they should repent and do works to show they really had changed."³⁸

And when Peter preached on Pentecost, he told the people to, "Repent and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."³⁹ Later, after healing the cripple in the Temple, Peter also said, "So you must repent! Turn back to God, and he will forgive your sins."⁴⁰

The message preached in Scripture is that we receive forgiveness through repentance! Repentance means you change your life! It means everything changes! It means you stop doing what is wrong *and* you start doing what is right!

If you don't repent, then you're not in Christ Jesus! If you don't repent, then there is still condemnation!

So, to all those people who would say, "this makes me feel condemned," if you're not obeying Jesus, you are still condemned. If you're not obeying Jesus, you're believing a false gospel. If you're not obeying Jesus, you're one of those people Paul said would leave the truth and follow teachers who tell them things they want to hear. You're trying to remind yourself that you have forgiveness when you don't. You're trying to remind yourself that Jesus paid for your sins, when you haven't been joined to Jesus in the first place. Your old life hasn't died! You're still living! Christ isn't living in you!

The Church today preaches a false gospel, telling people that they can continue living in this world, for this world, and for themselves, as long as they believe in Jesus. Countless millions are believing this lie, following false teachers, and are headed toward destruction. They are anticipating the day when they will see Jesus face to face, but they will only hear him say, "I never knew you." The warning God gave apostate Israel is the same warning for apostate Christians: "Woe to you who want the day of the LORD to come. Why do you want that day to come? It will bring darkness for you, not light... the day of the Lord will bring darkness, not light; it will be deep gloom, not brightness."⁴¹

Christians want the day of the Lord to come. They want Jesus to return. They eagerly watch for his coming. But they live in apostasy. That day won't bring light for them. It will bring darkness. It will bring gloom. It will be a day when they are forever thrown out of God's presence because they didn't obey him.

The gospel preached in the Church is wrong! Forgiveness is not granted to people who don't change! Following Jesus costs everything! If you haven't died with him, you can't live with him. If

³⁶ Ref. Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23

³⁷ Luke 24:45-47

³⁸ Acts 26:20

³⁹ Acts 2:38

⁴⁰ Acts 3:19

⁴¹ Amos 5:18-20

you're trying to remind yourself that you're forgiven when you're not obeying him, you're deceived! You cannot have life with Jesus unless you give up this life. You will not be welcomed into his Kingdom unless you stop living for this life and live for him.

I recently heard someone say that she was frustrated with a family member who wouldn't become a Christian. She said, "Why won't he become a Christian? It's not like it will cost him anything. All he has to do is believe!"

This is not biblical! This is the exact opposite of what Jesus said! He said following him costs everything!⁴² Unless you die, you cannot have life!

Becoming a Christian is not about going to heaven. Jesus isn't just a ticket into heaven. Jesus provided a way for us to be set free from slavery to sin so that we can live a new life.⁴³ If we don't do that – if we don't have our old lives die, join ourselves to Jesus, follow him and obey him faithfully – then we don't have forgiveness, and we do still have condemnation!

If you feel condemned because you're disobeying Jesus, it's because you *are* condemned! It's because the Holy Spirit is condemning you – pleading with you to repent! But if you keep refusing to repent, you will get to judgment day and say, "Lord, Lord," but Jesus will say, "I never knew you. You practiced unrighteousness. You refused to come to me to have life."⁴⁴

Scripture clearly teaches that true Christians will obey Jesus. Jesus compared it to passing from death to life. He said a seed must fall to the ground and die in order to have life.⁴⁵ Unless we give up everything in this life, we can't have life.

If we want to have forgiveness and know we're not condemned, then we must start obeying Jesus. If we're not obeying him, we could tell ourselves that we're forgiven all day long every day until we die... it doesn't make it true.

Just because your favorite preacher tells you to remember that you're forgiven, even if you're not obeying, it doesn't make it true. The gospel preached in Scripture was not, "say a sinner's prayer and then you'll go to heaven someday." The gospel preached in Scripture was that you must change the way you live. Everything about your life must die, and you must live entirely for God and his kingdom – doing what God says is right.

Everything changes when you follow Jesus: You stop living for this world. You stop living for comfort. You stop living for pleasure. You stop living the American dream. You stop spending your time watching TV, watching the news, and getting wrapped up in the cares and politics of this world. You stop being a part of this world.

Everything must change.

So many people feel condemned because nothing has really changed in their lives. They don't obey the commands of Jesus. They don't do what God says is right. They don't live in true, biblical love. Their lives look no different than the world around them.

They feel condemned when they don't do what they know they should do, because they don't really feel like doing it. Paul said that Jesus gave himself "to make us pure people who belong only to him – people who are always wanting to do good deeds."⁴⁶ Yet today, most Christians aren't always wanting to do good deeds. They're wanting what's best for themselves. They want a comfortable life. Then they feel condemned when they keep choosing to ignore the good deeds they know they're supposed to be doing. So, they keep telling themselves that they're forgiven, and they keep listening to sermons and reading books that tell them they're forgiven.

⁴² Ref. Matthew 10:39; Luke 14:26-27, 14:33

⁴³ Ref. John 8:31-34; Romans 6:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 5:24; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10

⁴⁴ Ref. Matthew 7:21-23

⁴⁵ Ref. John 12:24-25

⁴⁶ Titus 2:14

Again, as Paul said, “...the time will come when people will not listen to the true teaching but will find many more teachers who please them by saying the things they want to hear. They will stop listening to the truth and will begin to follow false stories. But you should control yourself at all times, endure hardships, do the work of an evangelist, and complete all the duties of a servant of God.”⁴⁷

Paul predicted that this time would come. He knew people would turn away from the message that was preached by Jesus and the apostles. They all preached that we must obey Jesus. But he knew the time would come when people would surround themselves with teachers who teach a different message. He knew people would surround themselves with men who teach what they want to hear.

What do people want to hear?

They want to hear, “You’re forgiven. You’re forgiven. Just remember you’re forgiven. You keep sinning? You’re forgiven. Just remember you’re forgiven. You’re forgiven by believing. You don’t have to obey. You’re forgiven. Just remember you’re forgiven. Try to do a few nice things here and there, but remember you’re forgiven when you don’t.”

This is what people want to hear because it makes them feel good. When they keep sinning and the Holy Spirit convicts them, they fill their ears with this false gospel until they’ve satiated their fears.

Paul warned us about this. He said people would find teachers who tell them what they want to hear. But then he immediately contrasted that by saying, “But you – do the work of a servant of God.”

Why did Paul immediately contrast the message of the false teachers with an instruction to do the work of a servant of God?

Because true Christians will be doing work. They will be obeying. They will be doing what is right. They won’t continue living in sin or living for their own best interests.

Don’t listen to all the preachers who preach that you can be saved without doing anything. Don’t believe you can be forgiven without obeying Jesus.

From cover to cover, Scripture teaches that we must obey God.

We were warned by the apostles, and the Lord Jesus himself that false teachers would be in our midst. We were warned that they would teach lies that would lead people to destruction. We were warned that many people would believe their lies.

Today, many Christians believe the lie that they can be saved without works. They dismiss the conviction of the Holy Spirit by finding teachers who tell them, “Remember you’re forgiven.” Meanwhile, Scripture says that if you’re not following Jesus, you’re not forgiven. If you haven’t repented, you don’t have forgiveness.

Many people think they’re forgiven only because they’ve accepted a false gospel. They think they’re forgiven because they’ve accepted a gospel that tells them they’re saved by believing in Jesus. But Scripture teaches that we’re saved by fidelity to Jesus.

You’re not saved by just believing. You’re saved by fidelity. You’re saved by faithfulness. You’re saved by loyalty and reliability. You’re saved by forsaking everything else and clinging only to Jesus because you love him. You’re saved by obeying the commands of Jesus and the commands of God because you love him. And only those who obey him truly love him. If you don’t obey him, then you don’t love him.⁴⁸

So, to the objection that says, “Well, this makes me feel condemned,” the answer is, if you’re not obeying Jesus, you are condemned. Whether you feel condemned or not does not determine what is true. Whether you like the message or not doesn’t determine what is true.

⁴⁷ 2 Timothy 4:3-5

⁴⁸ Ref. John 14:15, 14:21, 14:23; 1 John 5:3

If you feel condemned, there's an answer!
Repent!
Change your life!
Change the way you're living!
Change everything about what is important you!
Only one thing is truly important!

But as long as you don't repent and change your life to make the kingdom of God the only thing that's important to you, you are condemned. That's what Scripture teaches. That's what the apostles all taught. That's what Jesus taught. They warned you to not follow those teachers who teach otherwise. They warned you that if you do, you will follow them into destruction. They warned you that those false teachers would be everywhere, and that many would be deceived by them. They warned you to stay away from them.

Don't listen to the people who teach that you don't have to obey. They are liars. Paul called them "servants of Satan."⁴⁹ They're teaching a false gospel. Paul warned us that Christians would believe a false gospel, they would believe in a false Jesus, and they would receive a false spirit.⁵⁰ Do not become one of those people. Make sure what you believe and what you are doing lines up with what Scripture teaches.

What the Church teaches today is a false gospel. It's a gospel of lawlessness. It's a gospel that says you don't need to obey. It's a gospel that says you're saved by believing. It says you're saved purely by what Jesus did, and you don't have to do anything.

That is not what Scripture teaches.

You do have to do something – you must obey him. You must forsake everything and follow him. You are saved by fidelity to Jesus.

If you feel condemned because you're not obeying him, it's because you are condemned.

If you *are* obeying him – if your life is all about obeying Jesus, and your life is centered around him – if everything has changed, and your perspective is on the kingdom – if your life is defined by loving the brothers and sisters in action – if you are dedicating your life to doing good deeds to meet urgent needs because that's what Jesus wants you to do, and you love him – if that's what defines you, not just something you do occasionally – if you build your life around living this way so that you can maximize your effectiveness – if this is what defines your life, and your heart still condemns you, then you can be reassured before God, you can have peace with God, you can come before God with confidence, and you can receive what you ask for because you obey his commands.⁵¹

The true Christian life is not for those who merely believe. It's for those who obey. It's for those who follow Jesus and obey him wholeheartedly. It's for those who love the Lord their God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind, and all their strength. It's for those who love with more than just emotions and feelings. It's for those who prove their love through obedience. Those who obey him are the ones who truly love him. If you don't obey him, you don't truly love him.⁵²

If you are condemned because you're guilty, then repent.

Change the way you're living.

Stop telling yourself that you're forgiven when you're not – because that will not end well for you. And if you are living righteously – obeying the commands of Jesus, obeying the commands of God – and your heart condemns you, then you can have peace before God. Go before him with

⁴⁹ Ref. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

⁵⁰ Ref. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

⁵¹ Ref. 1 John 3

⁵² Ref. John 14:15, 14:21, 14:23; 1 John 5:3

confidence. God knows everything; he knows that you're faithful to him.

Finally, there might be one other type of person. This last type of person is one who feels condemned (or justified!) because they don't know the difference between the commands of Jesus and human traditions.

Growing up in the Church, it is difficult to know the difference between what Jesus actually wants us to do, and what the Church tells us we should do. They're usually very different things!

So, we need to know: What does it mean to obey Jesus as opposed to just following human traditions?

If we feel guilty because we're not following human traditions, then we need to recognize them for what they truly are: they're just human traditions! Stop feeling condemned about those things! Or, on the flip-side, if we feel justified because we're diligently obeying things that are only human traditions, we need to realize that we might not be doing what God actually wants – and therefore, we might not be justified at all.

In the next video, we will look at the commands of Jesus and some of the traditions of men. When Scripture tells us we need to obey the commands of God and the commands of Jesus, what are those commands? What should we be doing?

After that, in the following videos, we will dive into what those commands look like practically.

I know this video may have seemed a bit harsh. But, I hope it convicts you. If you have been dismissing the importance of obedience because it makes you feel condemned, I hope this video has convicted you enough to at least go check it out for yourself to see what Scripture teaches.

Stop listening to preachers. Go to Scripture and find out for yourself what it says. Stop following men. Stop following people who tell you things that make you feel good. Stop listening to people who tell you what you want to hear. On judgment day, what you wanted to hear might not be what you really wanted to hear.

What you need is the truth. Sometimes the truth hurts. But you don't want to get to judgment day having believed a lie because that was what was most comfortable. Go find the truth for yourself. If you go to Scripture, willing to give up everything if that's what Scripture tells you to do, and you ask God to teach you, he will. He will lead you into all truth.⁵³ Jesus said the Holy Spirit will teach you everything.

So, let the Holy Spirit be your teacher, and go find out if you're forgiven or not.

⁵³ Ref. John 14:25-26, 16:12-15