“Acquitted of All Charges”

November 25, 2018

Romans 8:35-39

Please find with me the eighth chapter of the Book of Romans.

You’ve probably heard or read this very commonly used phrase today which goes like this. “Acquitted of all charges.” And, because these four words are so common today, they have come to mean almost nothing to us, while, at the same time, they are *the most important* four words for the person whose been acquitted.

Accusations of all sorts fly today. Court cases being tried are in the news every day. Verdicts are being decided. Newspapers carry stories about people who’ve been accused of some of the most horrendous crimes. And many of those who’ve been accused, tried, and some even sentenced, have been acquitted.

So, today’s Bible topic is acquittal.

The great eighteenth century Christian jurist and Judge William Blackstone once said this. *“It’s better that ten guilty persons escape unpunished than that one innocent suffer.”*

Even the second President of the United States, John Adams agreed with Judge Blackstone. He said this in December 1770. *“We are to look upon it as more beneficial, that many guilty persons should escape unpunished, than one innocent person should suffer. The reason is, because it’s of more importance to community, that innocence should be protected, than it is, that guilt should be punished;*

*for guilt and crimes are so frequent in the world, that all of them cannot be punished; and many times they happen in such a manner, that it is not of much consequence to the public, whether they are punished or not.* *But when innocence itself, is brought to the bar and condemned, especially to die, the subject will exclaim,*

*it is immaterial to me, whether I behave well or ill; for virtue itself, is no security. And if such a sentiment as this, should take place in the mind of the subject, there would be an end to all security whatsoever.”* [Found on https://founders.- archives.gov “Adams’ Argument For The Defense”].

The courtroom is an awesome place. And you can’t escape the courtroom scene, when you read Romans. You find a bench, a Judge, an accused, a trial, a defense, witnesses, even legal arguments. Then you find a verdict. And this is especially true here in this eighth chapter. But also, you can’t escape an acquittal. What’s on my heart today? Acquittal. What does this great legal mind, the Apostle Paul, say about acquittal? I’ve titled today’s sermon “Acquitted of All Charges.” Shall we pray?

Can you remember the last time you were in court? When was the last time you had to stand before a judge? Let me remind you that the Judge here in Romans eight is God Himself. The accused are you and me; sinners; rightly accused because every sin is a breaking of God’s laws. And the accused are tried and found guilty.

But the acquitted? Who are they? An acquitted person is a person who’s been tried in a court of law and declared guiltless. To acquit means “to completely clear an accused person of any guilt.” Think, as an example, of the acquittal of the thief on the Cross. Rather than acquit him, Rome crucified him. But, what did Jesus say to this man as he died? He said *“Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”* (Luke 23:43). That very day he found his acquittal before God.

Locate with me the thirty-first verse of this chapter.

Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

*(33) Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

If you’ve been reading Romans or studying along with us this past year, you know that God is Just. Actually He is pure justice. And, since justice is absolute with God, then every single person here has been found guilty. Every soul that sins is a guilty sinner.

And yet, it was the Holy Spirit who brought to us a deep sense of that guilt and condemnation. We’re guilty and we’re condemned – by God – for what we’ve both done and not done. Every one of us has broken the Ten Commandments. So, not a single soul here deserves anything from God, but His just condemnation.

Folks, if you’ve sensed guilt over your sins; that is good. To never have sensed the guilt for your sins; to never have felt condemned for your sins; if you’ve always thought of yourself as good; if you’ve always viewed yourself as having done enough good things to get you right with God, then you really have no need for an acquittal. You see, acquittal is for those who have been brought into court and been charged with a crime.

Do you remember the Bible account of two men who went up to the Temple in Jerusalem to pray; one a sinner and one a religious man? One, a Pharisee and one, a publican, a Jewish tax collector who worked for Rome.

Here’s the whole story. Luke 18:10 *“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

*(13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

The publican was the cheater. He’s the one who, seeing a man carrying a heavy load, would walk up to him, and on the spot, tax him for the amount of weight he carried. “Every Roman was to pay 1% of his annual income for income tax. But that was not all, there were also import and export taxes, crop taxes (1/10 of grain crop and 1/5 of wine, fruit, and olive oil), sales tax, property tax, emergency tax, and on and on. It was actually a Roman official (a censor) who was ultimately responsible to Rome for collecting the revenue of the province. But he sold the rights to extort tax to the highest bidders… When they collected their taxes for Rome, they would turn over the required amount of money, and whatever they could add on for themselves is what they kept. They were known to be extortioners of large sums of money.” [Found on [www.bible-history.com](http://www.bible-history.com) “Illustration of a Publican in his Office”].

So, clearly, the worst offender of the two at the Temple that day was the publican. But, which one went home justified? Which one was acquitted? It was the publican; and for one reason, he pleaded for mercy. He threw himself upon the mercy of the court; verse thirteen.

Luke 18:13 *“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”*

Sinners are the only ones who have the potential of being acquitted. Pharisees, like the one in this story; they don’t class themselves as sinners. They are quote “better” than the sinners around them.

So, Romans is really about sinners who, because of One Man’s work, are completely exonerated. The sentence and the punishment for sinners is both death and Hell. And only the man or woman who understands himself or herself to be a candidate for both death and hell can ever consider themselves a candidate for acquittal.

Here’s what God teaches us from this eighth chapter of Romans.

First, God justifies sinners; verse thirty-three.

Romans 8:33 *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.”*

Think about it like this. You’ve been charged with a crime. Your crime? Breaking God’s laws. And who here is *not* a law-breaker? Folks, in the court of God, every man, woman, and child on earth has broken God’s laws. If you’re alive today; or if you’ve ever lived on this earth, then you’ve broken God’s laws. We are all in the same boat; spiritually speaking.

But, what does God’s Word say to you today? *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.”*

You who are His elect, His chosen, have been justified. And inside justified is this. One, acquittal. And two, a God-given gift of righteousness. No one, no one on earth, no one in heaven, no one in Hell, no one can lay a single charge against you; ever; ever again.

The last time I was in court was in a New Haven court. I was charged with using my phone while driving. So, while I waited a prosecutor came over to me and said “I can get your fine reduced by fifty-per cent. But, you are guilty.”

Now, folks, was I acquitted? No. I had to agree that I’d broken the law of CT and I had to pay a fine. That’s not acquittal. That’s guilt; even if I only had to pay a reduced fine.

But God justifies sinners. He acquits them. He absolves us of guilt.

First, He justifies sinners.

Second, He removes any and all condemnation; verse thirty-four. Romans 8:34 “*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

You see, in the case of Christ and those He justifies, here is the whole story. A Just Judge acquits a guilty defendant, a sinner, because an innocent party, Jesus Christ, suffers that defendant’s penalty (re-read).

Think deeply about this because this is the essence of your eternal security. What is Paul writing about here? God justifies. He doesn’t just acquit. He justifies. He makes the defendant just, right, righteous. And, further, He removes any and all condemnation.

And how can it be that God would remove His condemnation from us? Did you see the four things that Paul tells us?

One, Jesus Christ died.

Two, Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Three, Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven and sits at God’s right hand.

And four, Jesus Christ makes intercession for us.

The only way you can be acquitted is through Someone Else’s credibility. The only way is through Someone Else’s receiving the condemnation we deserve. And Jesus Christ is that Someone Else.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah puts it like this. Isaiah 54:17 says this *“No weapon formed against you will succeed, and you will refute any accusation raised against you in court. This is the heritage of the Lord’s servants, and their righteousness is from Me. This is the Lord’s declaration.”*

What did Jesus do for you? On what basis does God, the Father, remove any and all condemnation from you? On the basis of what His Son Jesus did for you.

If Jesus’ death makes no sense to you; if Jesus’ resurrect-tion makes no sense to you; if the Person of Jesus is not the Entire Foundation for your very existence now that you know about Him, then you are lost. You are today still under God’s just condemnation.

But, if the sweetest name on earth to you is Jesus; if the death of Christ gives you your greatest security for eternity; if His resurrection still astounds and confounds you and blesses your soul day after day; if you can sing about Jesus with all your heart, then, you know that you’ve been acquitted and you are no longer condemned. Jesus died. He then overcame death. Then He rose from the dead.

But, that’s not all. At this very moment, Jesus, at His Father’s right hand in glory is your Intercessor. Hebrews 7:25 puts it this way. *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”*

Complete acquittal, justification, no possibility of condemnation, and an Intercessor. What more do you need or want?

Well, what’s an intercessor anyway? Someone who intercedes is this. Intercession is the act of One Person pleading a case for someone else. He’s the One Who goes before the Authority on behalf of someone else. And the Biblical intercessor is the Priest. For example, when was the last time you had a conflict, a very difficult situation, or a problem for which you needed help? Was it yesterday? Is it today?

Well, right next to the Father in Heaven is a Priest Who fully understands whatever it is you are facing. And that Priest is, at that very moment interceding for you. He’s your Priest. He’s on your side.

And let me show you why. Why do you need Jesus to be your Intercessor today?

Here’s why. The world, your flesh, and the devil are constantly attempting to lay charges against you. They want you to think you are condemned. They want you to feel you are condemned. They are your enemies.

But, as you know, Satan doesn’t care for the truth. So, through his demons and through his human emissaries, through thoughts and ideas, Satan whispers lies to the Saints. He lays charges against all of the LORD’s saints. He says things like “You are a sinner. You don’t deserve anything good from God. And you don’t pray well. You don’t need truth to fill your mind every day. You can get along without the Bible filling your heart today. Besides, you still sin. Do you think God is going to hear and answer *your* prayers? You don’t deserve God’s love. You’ll never be good enough.” And such like things.

Folks, every time Satan attempts to lure you away from the LORD and His Word, Jesus intercedes for you. Satan accuses while Jesus intercedes.

Let me illustrate it like this. Consider a little boy with his dad. He’s about seven or eight years old. Now, does that little boy ever feel condemned as though his dad or his mom don’t like him or need him or want him? No, not naturally, unless the parent constantly berates him and beats him for no reason. But the natural condition of the child is a sense of “no condemnation.” Whatever the child is, he or she is a son or daughter who is greatly loved and cared for by his parents.

Now, apply that picture to what we see in Heaven. Jesus, the Perfect Son, intercedes for you constantly and perfectly. Whatever your problem, whatever your need, whatever your situation, He’s fully aware of it. And He’s coming to His Father on your behalf, as if you were the only person in the world that had a need.

Jesus is your Perfect Intercessor. He’s always speaking up on your behalf. He’s got your back; every single time.

So, today, when your hear the words of Satan telling you that you are worth very much to God, that you are not spending enough time in the WORD or in prayer, that you are not deserving of His time or His answers, then respond to those thoughts with Romans 8:33-34*“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

First, He justifies sinners.

Second, He removes any and all condemnation.

And third, He loves you beyond all earthly love.

That’s the essence of Romans 8:35-39, which we’ll ask you to read and re-read and memorize this coming week. Next time we’ll take up the topic of God’s love of individuals.

So, in conclusion, let me remind you of this. What you dwell on is what makes you or breaks you.

Each morning as you begin your day, reflect as follows:

1. Reflect on the Trinity. Who is the Father? Who is the Son? Who is the Holy Spirit? Your Father is your Heavenly Father Who cares for every single aspect of your life. He is for you. Jesus is your Savior and your Life. And the Holy Spirit has made your body His Temple.
2. Reflect on the world at large. What’s happening in the world? Isn’t the world in darkness and in need of the Light of the Gospel?
3. Three, consider your own life. What part does your life play in the lives of the people in your life and around you?
4. Then last, consider Jesus as your Intercessor Who will see to every single thing in your life. Tell Him you will trust Him to handle it all. And be sure to praise Him.

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 356 “Redeemed”