“No Condemnation”

9/17/2017

Romans 8:1-10

Please take your Bible with me and open to Acts 25.

How long can you hold something against someone? We call that a grudge. How long can you hold a grudge?

Holding something against someone takes effort. Now, is it possible that there’s a Biblical example of people holding something against someone for years? I believe so. But first, this.

*“Well, it happened to me [says Margaret Weiss in her blog] - my own mother did it to my child - and she's been out of my life for about a decade now (many more decades will pass until she comes to the terms with the transgression; I had already forgiven her - I don't hold anger with anyone, but she has no place in my life).”* It doesn’t sound to me as though this daughter has forgiven her mother. Nor has she forgotten the offense, especially if they haven’t spoken in decades.

Author Alan Brandt is credited with once (1995) writing *“Being resentful is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”*

When I read today’s passage in Acts a number of weeks ago, I wondered “Is this how hard-hearted people really can be?” Look with me at the last verse of Acts 24. Acts 24:27 *“But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.”*

Folks, I want to let you know at the outset, that today’s sermon is a Bible story. Yet, it might just be a story you’ve never heard. Why do I say that? Because, usually to understand the Bible, you have to read the passage more than once and then think it through. A Bible Christian is someone who thinks critically about what he reads.

And I want you to think well – about God, about people, about yourself, and about the events of the Bible; many of which are often historical Bible stories. You also, in order to understand the Bible, you need the back story. So, for today, today might be a back story you’ve never heard.

Now, it’s the two years I want you to see here. Acts 24:27 *“But after* ***two years*** *Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.”*

Earlier in Acts we read that Paul has already been accused by the Sanhedrim’s orator Tertullus. He’s presented his case before the Governor of Judea, a man named Felix. That’s the gist of this 24th chapter. That took place when Porcius Felix was Governor of Judea. He’s now been replaced by Porcius Festus.

And under Felix Paul had been given the opportunity to defend himself. He’s told Governor Felix that, after all of the arguments presented by Tertullus, the only thing they had against him was his beliefs. In particular, he believed in the resurrection of Jesus; verse eighteen. Acts 24:18 *“Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. (19) Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.*

*(20) Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, (21) Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.”*

Governor Felix has now kept Paul under some type of house arrest. And it’s been two long years. During that time, two things have happened. One, Paul has had a number of conversations with Governor Felix about his faith in Christ.

And, two, Felix has been replaced by Festus. Now, it’s been two years. Wouldn’t you think that the Jewish leaders; those who had brought Paul before the Governor, would go on to something else? But no! These Jewish leaders are still holding something against Paul.

Who here can hold something against someone for two years? In your marriage, can you hold something against your spouse for minutes or hours or days? But two years. That is a very long time to hold something against someone.

So, I thought “Wouldn’t these Pharisees and Sadducees simply forget about Paul; especially if his claim that Jesus rose from the dead wasn’t true?”

The answer is “No!” Acts 25, today’s study, says “No!” These leaders are out for Paul’s head. So, what really happened?

Governor Felix, Porcius Felix, according to historians, has been called back to Rome by the Roman Emperor Nero. He’d lasted just three years as Governor and he’s now been replaced by a man named Festus; Porcius Festus. By the way, the name Festus means “joyful and festive.”

And so Paul has been under a type of house imprison-ment for a full two years. So, when I thought that the Jews would no longer have any interest in Paul, I was wrong. They’d already made their case before Felix. The Orator Tertullus had argued against Paul. And Paul has now been kept under a thumb of a Roman Governor. Wouldn’t that be enough? Nope.

Acts 25 is the evidence that some people can hold things against others for years. After 24 months the Jews have the same hatred, the same antagonism, and the same case against the Apostle Paul.

So, when I ask you the question “How long can you hold something against someone?” The answer is “A long time.”

I’ve titled today’s sermon “No Condemnation.” Shall we pray?

Most of us who’ve read and studied the Bible think we know Paul through his epistles. And we also think we know Paul on his missionary journeys. Yet, who knows him before the Sanhedrim?

Acts 25 is a repeat of Acts 24; “The Case against the Apostle: Part Two.” These Jews are still holding bad feelings towards Paul. They will do whatever they can to get rid of Him. So, they re-accuse Paul. But, this time it’s before the newest Governor of Judea. His name is Festus. And this time the one who argues the case is the High Priest himself.

Historians, historians of the first century AD, have a record of the High Priests of Israel. And that list includes the years they served. Now, the High Priest at this time was Ishmael, son of Phabi. Phabi had already been a High Priest; back in 15 to 16 A.D. It’s now forty years later. It’s 56 A.D. and he’s now been re-instated.

Now you’ve heard about and maybe even read about the Roman Emperor Nero. He’d put a man named Herod Agrippa II in charge of Palestine. By the way, this man, Herod Agrippa II, was the grandson of the Herod Antipas. Do you remember him from the Gospels? He’s the one who oversaw the crucifixion of Jesus.

And part of Agrippa’s oversight was the Temple; but not just the Temple. He also had the authority to decide who served as the Jewish High Priest. And King Agrippa II chose to re-instate a priest named Ishmael.

Someone has wisely compared the experience of Paul here in Acts to the experience of Jesus. See if you don’t agree. *“If we follow [his] journey we can see lots of close parallels to Jesus’ journey. Jesus went on a journey and eventually arrived in Jerusalem. So did Paul. Jesus was picked up by Jewish authorities and handed over to the Romans. So was Paul.*

*Jesus was interrogated by the Roman governor; who at one point brought him before [King] Herod Antipas; Paul was interrogated by two Roman governors and brought before [King] Herod Agrippa. Jesus was sent to his death, and Paul was sent to Rome…”* [From “Do We Really Serve the Same God?” by Nathan Colquhoun; found on [www.nathancolquhoun.com](http://www.nathancolquhoun.com).

Now, folks, here’s the reason I’ve titled today’s sermon “No Condemnation.” As Paul stood before Governor Felix, the Governor could find nothing against him. Now he’s before Governor Festus. And, as you are about to see, this new Governor will find nothing against him either.

Let’s see. Follow with me at verse one. Acts 25:1 *“Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. (2) Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, (3) And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.*

*(4) But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. (5) Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.*

*(6) And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.(7) And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.”*

Festus had only been in Judea for three days and the Jews are bringing their same case against Paul. But, do they have a case? Verse seven.

Acts 25:7 *“And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.”*

They also had no case against Jesus. Yet, what happened to *Him*? Now, they’ve got no case against a man who is preaching that Jesus rose from the dead. So, what could conceivably happen? That’s right! Paul could be condemned to death under public pressure; for no legitimate reason.

When you go before a judge, he or she wants you to prove your case. Otherwise, it will be thrown out. A judge, if he’s fair, will listen to the charges. He will then give you a hearing so either your lawyer or you can defend yourself.

Now comes some deeper thought. It appears as though Porcius Festus was fair. But, let me add this. Governor Festus has a problem; actually he had a number of problems.

For example, the Jews. At the time Festus was governing Judea, the Jewish hatred for the Romans was slowly beginning to boil. By that, I mean. They already despised the Romans. But, the Romans were in charge. And they hated the Roman taxes. They hated the Roman tax collectors. But, more importantly, they despised the fact that the Roman Government was in charge of their religion, their Temple, and, to cap it all off; they were even in charge of deciding who their High Priest would be and how long he would serve.

So, what was taking place throughout Palestine is that the common Jews were beginning to rebel and to riot. Gangs of Jews; large and larger gangs would kill. They would burn property down. They’d steal. There were lots of, what we’d call, outlaws among the Jewish population at this time. And these Jewish outlaws were rarely caught and, even when they were caught, they would oftentimes go punished if they could pay off their captors.

Besides all this; the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrim, were corrupt. Instead of seeking the LORD; instead of honoring Him with their hearts and lives. They were a morally corrupt bunch. They stole the tithes that were brought to the Temple. And it anyone complained, they’d beat ‘em up. And, so, any chance they could, the Jewish leaders would attempt to get on the good side of the Governor of Judea. The, he’d show then favor.

But, go back with me to Herod for just a moment. While King Herod I had helped the Jews by building their Temple, (which took 60 years to build); Herod Agrippa II, the man now in charge, didn’t like the Jews. Neither did Governor Festus.

And Agrippa had just built a new palace for himself – in Jerusalem. But, since it was too close to the Temple, he decided to have a new stone wall built inside the Temple; so he couldn’t see *it* and the people who came to the Temple couldn’t see *him*. The already furious Jews got even madder.

So, the common Jews were beginning to riot. The Jewish leaders were corrupt. And now Festus has a Jew before him without a single legal reason to condemn him. He didn’t even have a reason to hold him.

So, new on the job, what’s Festus going to do? Fortunately, Paul provided him an answer. Look with me at Acts 25:8. Acts 25:8 *“While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all. (9) But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?*

*(10) Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. (11) For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.*

*(12) Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go.”*

How convenient! How perfect for Festus! Paul has accusers; but all false allegations. Festus wants to keep a good name before Rome and keep the Jews somewhat under control and somewhat happy. Now, he also knows that the Jews would easily find a way to kill Paul if he sets him free.

So, first, “Paul, would you be willing if we took this case up to Jerusalem? And when Paul hears that, he immediately says *“I appeal to Rome,”* He knew he’d have no chance in Jerusalem. He, likely, remembered what he had done in his former life when he brought Christians to Jerusalem. But, this all gets Festus gets off the hook. *“Good, I’ll send him to Rome, I’ll even provide soldiers to get him there safely. And I’ll let Rome deal with him.”*

Now, folks, all of this revolves around one thing; the truth. And the truth is this. “There is therefore now no condemnation…”

Paul was not a condemned man. The only allegation worthy of a complaint was that he believed that Jesus was alive. And the Jews hated him for it. And they were ready to kill him for his belief in Jesus.

So, how great is this? Right now, if you are a Believer in Jesus Christ; right now, you stand before your Heavenly Judge Creator with this very same legal decision: “No Condemnation.”

So, let me make this very personal. By birth, by choice, by nature, and by experience, you are a sinner. You’ve also broken every one of the Ten Commandments. Yet, a Perfectly Innocent Man has taken your place; sentenced to die. Jesus, the Innocent Lamb of God, was crucified as a condemned Man. He had not one sin. He was sinless. He was completely without sin. Yet, He died at Calvary.

For you; you are a sinner. Job 15:16 *“How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?”*

I Kings 8:46 *“…there is no man that sinneth not …”*

Romans 3:10 *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”*

Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; …”*

Now contrast those things with these.

Hebrews 7:26 *“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;…”*

 *“In a life that spanned three decades, our Lord never entertained a thought, never uttered a word, and never carried out an action that was defiled by impure motives. He always honored His Father in heaven, always honored His earthly father and mother, never lusted, never uttered a word in sinful anger, never gossiped about or*

*slandered His neighbor. He never stole, never lied, and never coveted. In short, He submitted to every commandment of the law of God without wavering. He loved the Lord with all His heart, soul, mind and strength, and He loved His neighbor as Himself.”* [Pastor Nicholas Batzig from “The Significance of the Sinlessness of Jesus” found on [www.ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org) from July 15, 2015].

Who was it that was crucified that day at Calvary 2,000 years ago? Was it Someone Who *deserved* that Cross? It was the Sinless Son of God. And why? He was made sin for you. He took your sin. He took your place.

*“To the Cross went the Sinless, Blameless, and Spotless Son of God, the Father; Savior and Messiah; Jesus, even though the Cross was intended the sinner, the murderer and seditionist Barabbas (son of father). Jesus went to the sinner’s cross to die by crucifixion in the place of the actual sinner (s). His death was vicarious.”*

In other words, He died as a Substitutionary Punishment for you.

II Corinthians 5:21 *“For he [the Father] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

Your sins are what separates you from the LORD. Yet, at the moment of your salvation, the moment you believe on Christ, God frees you from the bondage and the penalty for your sins. He cancels your entire debt against Him. That debt was caused by your sins. And He takes you into His family as His own son or daughter.

And what’s the result? From that moment to this and on into eternity, you stand with these words imprinted on your soul “No Condemnation.”

So, how many times have you felt condemned? How many times have you felt that you just haven’t measured up to God’s High Standards? Folks, this is where you stand as a Christian.

Romans 8:1 *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*(3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: …”*

Romans 8:15 *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16)**The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: …”*

Romans 8:38 *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Before Festus and then before Nero, Paul stood uncondemned. So, you and I stand completely uncondemned before the LORD. And why and how?

Romans 8:3 *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: …”*

Your condemnation was just. And yet, out of true Heavenly love, Jesus died at Calvary. And in dying, God condemned sin in the flesh. He did it so that forever you will not and cannot be condemned.

Have you ever said any of these things to yourself?

* I am not good enough.
* I never do enough for my friends and my spouse. I should be doing more.
* I am not where I should be in my Christian life.
* I am too much of all the *wrong* things and not enough of the *right* things.
* I am not a good enough Christian for God to use.
* I can’t possibly step out in ways God has gifted me, because everyone will see my failures and weaknesses.

[Adapted from and found on [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org) by

Christine Hoover “Two Words To Help Stop Self-Condemnation”].

In conclusion, note this. The simplest and yet the most powerful answer to these charges is found in one very small word. Let me show it to you.

Romans 3:23 *“For the wages of sin is death;* ***but*** *the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Romans 6:16 *“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (17)* ***But God*** *be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”*

Romans 8:8 *“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But ye are not in the flesh,* ***but*** *in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

I Corinthians 15:9 *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10)* ***But*** *by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*

II Timothy 1:7 *“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear;* ***but*** *of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

Titus 3:4 *“****But*** *after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; …”*

And here is that same word from Galatians 2:20 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I,* ***but Christ*** *liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Can you tell me what that one word answer for any self-condemnation that flies into your mind and heart is? It’s the contrastive conjunction “but.” It’s a word you use every single day of your life.

*“Each of us have encountered situations where we just felt like throwing in the towel. We’ve felt like the whole world was against us. We’ve felt like no matter what we did things would turn out bad. We’ve often said to ourselves, “No matter what I do things still won’t change”. Or we feel that we have gotten so far down that there is nothing that can bring us up.”* [Found on [www.sermoncentral](http://www.sermoncentral) “But God” by Pastor Lacy Scott August 24, 2005].

How important is this one little word? Let’s let the Apostle Paul answer for us. Paul says this I Corinthians 6:9 *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,*

*(10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you:* ***but*** *ye are washed,* ***but*** *ye are sanctified,* ***but*** *ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*

So, if you’ve never repented and received Jesus Christ as your Savior, today is the day you need that. You need to do so today and not wait for a more convenient time.

What do you need to do? Today you need to Repent and to Believe.

* To Repent = I change my mind about God, Christ, my sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe = I simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for my sins.

Here’s the Salvation Prayer*. “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and deserve judgment for my sins. I believe Jesus died in my place on the Cross to remove that judgment. Please save me today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Now let’s sing Hymn # 747 “Sunshine In My Soul”