

Funeral Message- Jack Vandenberg

Text: Romans 8:1-4

It is great to read together those Bible passages that meant so much to Jack. Psalm 91 is a fantastic testimony to the security for those who trust in God. Psalm 92 is a psalm of celebration of God's love and faithfulness to those who are planted in the house of the Lord.

Jack led a blessed life...resting in the security of God's faithfulness and love...
Right through the journey of his life.
That's why the Psalms read meant so much to him...
They were a constant reminder of God's faithfulness.

He was born in Velzeen, Holland 22/September/1923 and grew up in Huderwyk.
He married Emke in 1946 in Deventer.
Not long after they moved to a bakery in den Haag.
Eventually migrating to Australia in 1951.

The early years were spent moving around the Dandenong ranges before eventually settling on the farm in Langwarrin for 20years.

Later they moved off the property, downsizing, into Cranbourne, Endeavour Hills and, for the past 3 years in Outlook Gardens.

Through all of these transitions in life Jack and Emke knew the faithfulness of God.

Just speaking with Emke over the last few days about the way that she is able to look back on the 60 wonderful years she had with Jack, and she related how many times they could see God guiding their steps.

It was God who brought them together in a most amazing way...
As a resistance fighter Jack hid in a house of women, Emke being one of them.

Not long after arriving, coming home from church they stopped to help a stranger with a broken down bike...
They ended up with a house for themselves.

When Jack had to go into Hostel care it looked like they would be separated...
But God had different ideas.

Emke had heart problems which meant that she too qualified for hostel care...
They could continue to be together at Outlook Gardens.

When Jack had his fall a little over a week ago, the fracture on his hip was not identified by hospital staff until he had returned to the Hostel...
He was then able to spend his last days with Emke close by his side, in a place in which he was comfortable.

Now we come together today with our thoughts about Jack.
We have our memories, we have our opinions, and we have our perceptions...

But the big question that needs to be answered is...
What does God think about Jack?
What does God think about you?

Listen to Paul: "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

This, friends, is the good news!
That's what God says about Jack...

He was in Christ Jesus...so he was not condemned.

Are you in Christ Jesus?

There is then no condemnation from God upon you in any way, shape or form,
neither in this life nor in the life to come.

There is instead only grace, always grace....

Romans 8 is known as special within the whole Bible.

Commentators all agree: this chapter is glorious in its message, is profound in its comfort, and plumbs the depths and the heights of God's manifold grace in a way that no other chapter of Scripture does.

Jack understood the glorious message of this great chapter in Romans.
Here was the relief he was looking for.

To be told that there is no condemnation any more.... That's gospel, that's relief!

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
Even standing by itself there is something in those words that brings relief.
The significance of the fact that in spite of our sin, God doesn't condemn us is overwhelming in and of itself.
But you need to read these words in the light of the previous section.

It begins with a "therefore."

Obviously it's connected with something that goes before.
Chapter 7 tells us what the "therefore" is all about.

Chapter 7 is a powerful statement about struggling with sin.
Paul is giving us a glimpse into his own struggle.

Often when we think of the apostle Paul, we think of somebody who is bigger than life.

You see him standing up and defending his faith in front of the Roman governors and even the emperor.

His great missionary journeys took him all over the Roman empire.

He wrote letters to instruct the churches; he encouraged Timothy & Titus.

Probably most of us have put Paul on a pedestal.

But here in chapter 7 we get to see that Paul is a lot more human than we thought.

Paul is a fellow struggler.

Jack was a fellow struggler with sin...let's not put him on a pedestal either.

Paul admits that there is a struggle going on within every human being,

and when we try to win on our own strength we often fail.

How many times a week could you just kick yourself for failing?

You try to be patient with your kids or your spouse or your parents, but in a flash you strike out and the words you say have done their damage before you even knew it.

You thought you had broken the grip of that nasty habit, but there was that one weak moment, and you listened to the whisper that told you "it will be okay just this once," and now you feel like a failure.

You knew you should have steered clear, but you thought you could handle it. Before you know it, you have found out the hard way that you were weaker than you thought.

But the greatness of the promise of God's grace is that even when we fail again, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

There is security in our relationship with God.

If we are in Christ, we don't need to wonder if God is angry with us.

"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

If you have a personal relationship with Jesus, you don't need to fear God's wrath.

When God looked at Jack he didn't see a wretch, he saw a son.

When God looks at you, He doesn't see a wretch, He sees a son or daughter.

But the human heart is so unbelieving, and the devil so subtle.

So we find ourselves asking: what's meant by 'condemnation'?

And we give the term new meanings...

We say we are just too sinful for there to be NO condemnation.

We shift things around so the word agrees more with the way we experience things....

Does the term mean that No, God won't send us to hell, but Yes, He does show His annoyance with us in the little things going wrong in our lives every day?

Not at all.

The term 'condemnation' has two parts.

In the first place, the term refers to the decision a judge makes when he finds a person guilty of a crime; he 'condemns' the guilty (cf Mt 12:41f).

But, secondly, the meaning goes beyond the guilty verdict itself, for the term captures also the sentence imposed on the guilty.

That's to say: the *judge* finds a person guilty of certain charges *and* the *executioner* carrying out the sentence against the guilty person.

In the Biblical term 'condemnation', the verdict and the resulting sentence come together into one.

Now, Paul says that "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

I think that too often we have the idea God has given us parole rather than pardon. We think our salvation depends on good behaviour.

We see God with His score card; putting ticks or crosses, as the case may be according to our performance in doing ministry, fulfilling roles, accomplishing tasks, uttering prayers and giving money?

This is wrong!

It depends on the grace of God.

Paul is saying two things here.

The first is that God's verdict on those who are in Christ Jesus is 'Not guilty'.

The second has to do with the *consequences* of such a verdict.

Where God has decreed a person to be 'not guilty', there is no room left for any punishment, no room left for a sentence; there is instead only freedom.

Those are the two things Paul has in mind with his word of "No condemnation".

In plain English: *God has nothing against* "those who are in Christ Jesus," God has no reason to punish them, has no reason to be displeased with them.

This fact that God has nothing against Jack, or you or me is not on the grounds of anything in me.

I couldn't save myself; pay the penalty for my offences.

BUT.....

Jesus bridges the gap between heaven and earth that we couldn't cross.
He fixes the link that we broke.
He climbs the ladder off which we keep falling.
He meets the righteous requirements, says v.4,
and makes room in heaven's family for people who otherwise wouldn't belong

He earns the right for their presence in God's Home.
He brings acceptance for people who by rights ought to be condemned.

Praise God for that!
That's why this service today is about praise to God...
for his goodness, grace and mercy.

And this 'no condemnation' is not just talking about the way God looks at us on judgment day...that we are spared from hell.

It's much more than that.

Paul places the matter directly in the *present*,
in the here and now of today's circumstances.

It's what he says: "there is therefore *now* no condemnation." That is: *today*.

Conclusion

The challenge for us is not just to believe these words...no condemnation...
But to live like we know it.
Jack seems to have been one who lived in the understanding that he was not condemned.

This is not to say that everything in the life of Jack was perfect...
He had his struggles with sin...just like Paul...
He had to live through a war, move around a lot, came to a new land and language.

But there was one thing that held him secure
he knew his Lord and Saviour...

He knew and trusted God in every aspect of his life...and that gave him peace.
He knew and trusted God with his eternal destiny...and that gave him security.
Like those closing verses of the chapter read...
Nothing could separate Jack from his Saviour.

Not even the failing of his mind stopped that.
Right to the end his eyes would light up when the hymns were sung...
When the focus was on the God he loved.

And he would want all of you to know that Saviour...

To know freedom, new life, no condemnation...starting now!

Does God condemn you? Or accept?

Does He refuse you? Or welcome with open arms?

If you leave here today with only one sentence in your mind, one thought nestled in your heart...

I think Jack would want it to be these words:

There is.... NOW.... NO..... hear that - NO -condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.....

A fact - right now - for you that believe in Jesus Christ –

No condemnation.