

Sin is condemned

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the scripture we read in the epistle to the Romans chapter 8 and let's read again verses 3 and 4.

Romans chapter 8 at verse 3. For what the Lord 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.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. Probably the best known words of the gospel.

And from John 3.16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I think that next to that particular text the word that has resounded with the greatest sense of triumph and liberation throughout the Christian centuries.

[1 : 15] is the word with which this chapter begins. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

And indeed in uttering these words the apostle was just catching up on the words that follow in John's gospel upon the famous statement of 3.16.

Where we read for God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world. But that the world through him might be saved.

There is no condemnation with what a sense of relief with what gladness of people heard these words proclaim.

There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Yet you know I think it may be true to say that very often when people hear this statement and reflect upon it they hear and reflect upon a heart truth.

[2 : 29] They hear and reflect upon the argument that has preceded in Paul's letter to the Romans. what he has had to say about the relationship between God and man.

What he has had to say about the giving of the law by God and man's necessity and obligation of obedience to the law of God. His failure to render that obedience.

And how the law has pronounced its sentence upon him. How the law has brought in all guilty before God. There is no difference. For us all have sinned.

And come short of the glory of God. And over against this there is a story of God's intervention.

There at the point of man's helplessness. At the point where man is brought in a helpless lawbreaker without excuse. Without any ability to exonerate himself.

[3 : 38] With nothing to utter, with nothing to plead by way of mitigation that sentence of death should not be passed upon him. It's at that point that God has intervened.

He has sent forth his own son. Sent his son to be the sin bearer. God has found a way of deliverance. He sent his son to bear our sins on his body to the tree.

He has proclaimed the word, Save from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom. He has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

Imputed to Christ, imputed to his own son, The unrighteousness. Imputed to his own son and visited upon the head of his own son. The outcome, the consequences, the penalty of our infraction, of our violations of his holy law.

So that being justified freely, We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God has set him forth a propitiatory through faith in his blood, Declaring his righteousness and that he is just and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus.

[5 : 00] That's a great truth. This is the truth that is now proclaimed to the person in Christ Jesus. To the man who has found in Jesus Christ his refuge, his sin bearer, his propitiatory.

The truth proclaimed to him is that the law has nothing against you. The law's sentence has been carried out. Its judgment has been carried out to the fool.

And there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's what Paul has been telling us and that's what we tend to concentrate upon. And indeed you may say we call that a half-truth.

My, what an infinite thing the truth, the whole truth must be. To be sure it's a great and a splendid truth that Paul would have us reflect on.

He wants us to understand what has gone before. That's why he says there is therefore now no condemnation. In view of all that has been said. In view of all that I have brought before you.

[6 : 07] All that I have told you of the action of God in sending forth his son. There can be no condemnation. For those who are in Christ Jesus. That's not the end of the story.

Paul thinks of this as something. A story that is still being unfolded in the life of the people of God.

There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Because. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Has made me free from the law of sin and death. 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. Condemn sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk. Not after the flesh. But after the spirit.

[7 : 05] What Paul is arguing here. Is that the whole story of salvation. Involves not only something done for the sinner.

Not only a rescue mission that has been mounted on his behalf. And in virtue of which he is freed from the law's condemnation.

But he also wants us to understand that the whole story concerns something which has been done in the sinner. So that he lives a new life.

But what is the time served convict to do? Suppose liberation is proclaimed to us. The gates. The prison gates are open and we are set free.

But if we are the same people we were when we were taken. When we were imprisoned. Not long before we are back. Under condemnation once more.

[8 : 04] What is the time served convict to do when he is released from jail. Return to the old life. Then he will again be under condemnation.

Left to his own resources. That is almost bound to happen. Avoiding condemnation. Means leading and living a new life.

And that is what Paul has in mind here. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

But how has this been accomplished? That is what Paul wants us to understand now. And it is only as we understand this that we understand the completeness and the definitiveness of the break with sin in its reigning power.

Only as we understand this that we understand the definitiveness of the break with sin in its dominance. In the life of the believer.

[9 : 18] That it is all accomplished in union with Christ and by the energy of the spirit of Christ. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

So we want to reflect a little upon what I have suggested is the often neglected half of the truth associated with Paul's opening words.

There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. The part that concerns the new life of faith as life in the spirit.

As a life in which sin has been condemned in the flesh. As a life in which the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

As a life in which sin has been condemned in the flesh.

[10 : 45] One meaning and one meaning only for a word. And the two that concern us here particularly are the words condemnation and law.

You think of condemnation. As it is brought, as it is told to us in the first verse, there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

Of course the reference is to the damning verdict of violated law. The verdict that violated law pronounces upon those who are in breach of the law.

Guilty. And in consequence, the sentence that is passed is sentence of death. This is what the violated law proclaims to the sinner.

It is only one word to say to him. Sinner, you shall die. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

[11 : 49] There is no variation. There is no mitigation. There is only one sentence that the violated law pronounces.

One verdict to which it comes and one sentence that it proclaims. The guilty is worthy of death. And it's from this that, as we indicated, the sacrificial offering of the Son of God has delivered his people.

It's from this that the sacrifice of Jesus has brought salvation to us. We died in him. We thus judge, Paul says elsewhere, we thus judge that if one died for all, then all have died.

We are united to him. We have suffered in him. We have already suffered the sentence of death. In him we have died in order that in him we might live and reign again in righteousness.

He has died for us and we have died in him so that death has no more power over us. There is no condemnation. That's the first significance of the word.

[13 : 04] But at verse 3, it seems to me there is a different significance. There, condemnation is spoken of as something which was beyond the law's competence.

That's a very strange thing. We might have thought in terms of the argument that went before that there was anything that was within the competence of law. It was to condemn the guilty.

It was to pronounce the lawbreaker guilty and worthy of death. But Paul is telling us here, the law could not condemn sin in the flesh.

What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did. God condemned sin in the flesh. Sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

In the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, God condemned sin in the flesh. God condemned sin in the flesh. What the law could not do.

[14 : 16] We often hear people say, it's impossible to legislate people into righteousness. By passing laws, you will not make people good.

You will not make people just. You will not make people righteous. You will not make people holy. Law can point the way of virtue.

Law can alarm the conscience in case of violation. Law can even, good laws, can even create a public opinion which affords a favorable environment for civic righteousness.

But law of itself cannot make people hate what is evil. Law of itself cannot make people hate sin.

Cannot make people will the destruction of sin. Cannot make people will that sin in all its expressions, in all its forms, should be outlawed.

[15 : 25] But this is not its function. Indeed, there is evidence that law often acts as an exasperator of the sinner, provoking him to more and more sin.

Paul says, I had not known sin except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. It isn't the function of the law to make people hate sin.

It is the function of the law to reveal it. It is the function of the law to reveal transgression, to call to account for transgression. But it cannot make people hate sin.

It cannot condemn sin in the flesh. That is, it cannot make human nature totally, finally, and irrevocably repudiate sin.

The law of itself will never make any one of us totally, finally, and irrevocably repudiate sin.

[16 : 35] The law left to itself and to what it can accomplish will never make any one of us irrevocably repudiate what is evil.

Put it to the law. Put it to the ground. For the law is weak through the flesh. But this is what God does.

In the person of his son, his own son, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. Sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, not with sin, not himself a sinner, but in the likeness of sinful flesh, as one who was subject to the frailties of human nature, to the limitations of human nature in his human nature.

God sent him and condemned sin in the flesh. What I have been told here is that in spite of the fact that so persistent and so subtle, no matter how subtle and persistent the onslaughts that were made and the temptations that were laid before the Lord Jesus Christ, sin got no foothold, it got no toehold in him at all.

The prince of this world comes, he said, and has nothing in me. The prince of this world comes.

[18 : 10] He can't find he will not have the slightest hold over me. For not for one moment have I yielded to his solicitations.

Not for one moment have I given him the right, as it were, to digress, or to have me digress from the law of God.

Tempted he was constantly, publicly and secretly by men and by demons, but always he avowed, the law of the Lord is good.

I delight to do thy will, O my God. In Jesus Christ, sin was condemned in the flesh. In Jesus Christ, and in him, and in our behalf in him, sin was willed to destruction.

In the living, active obedience of our holy life, our Saviour condemned sin in the flesh, and his people in union with him condemn sin in the flesh.

[19 : 21] They have their motivation from him. That is a condemnation that the law of itself could not accomplish, that it could not achieve.

This was a condemnation that was beyond the competence of the law. It's no reflection upon the law. We're not finding fault with it. We're not saying anything other than that the law of God is holy and just and good, but that this was something beyond its competence, to condemn sin in the flesh.

Then let's think of what the apostle suggests to us in the use of the word law. After him, we've had to think and to speak a good deal about law.

Yet it's obvious in the passage before us that Paul uses the word in different senses. At least two. We have, for example, the expression, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and the law of sin and death.

In these two cases, the word seems to have the same significance. But later on, there is reference to the fulfillment of the law, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

[20 : 53] The law of the spirit of life, and the law of sin and death. Here it would seem that Paul is describing the principle of operation, the essential feature, the characteristic thrust.

This is how the spirit of life in Christ Jesus works. He works as a life-giving spirit.

He operates as a life-giving spirit. That is the principle upon which he operates. He comes to his people to communicate life to them. The principle of operation is this.

He makes me free for the law of sin and death. And in the same way, the principle of operation, the principle of operation, the essential feature of sin is that it leads on to death.

Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The apostle reminds us of what is the natural and unbreakable, except by divine intervention, the unbreakable connection between sin and death when he tells us the wages of sin is death.

[22 : 15] When he uses the words to describe the wages that are given to a soldier, which he doesn't take up as an option, but which he has to appear and take whether he likes what he gets or not.

The wages of sin is death. The way, the law of operation, its principle of operation, the principle of operation of sin is that it brings forth death.

But in the other case, the apostle has in mind, doubtless, the law as the index or the revelation of the righteous will of God.

for his people's conduct. The righteousness of the law. Is the law, this is the revelation of God's will, how he wishes his people to behave, what he wishes them to be and to do.

The law as the code of righteousness. righteousness. And it's eminently desirable that this righteousness be realized.

[23 : 29] We mustn't get into the way of thinking that because it is proclaimed to us that salvation is by grace, that the law has become unimportant. We mustn't get into the way of thinking that because salvation comes to us gratuitously, God has forgotten all that he has taught us in the background of his justice, of the righteousness that his righteousness requires him to require.

The righteousness of the law might be fulfilled. Paul is very careful elsewhere to remind us when he has established the gratuitousness of salvation when he tells us that justification is by the grace of the Savior.

What about it then? What about the law? Have we made it void? Not at all. And the truth of the matter is he says that we have established it and we establish it as a way of life for the people who know the salvation which is in Jesus Christ.

We have brought into their minds a greater admiration. We have planted in their minds a greater recognition of the holiness and the righteousness and the goodness of the law of God than ever they had before.

So, having clarified the particulars, let's try to put together the overall proof which the apostle is asserting here.

[25 : 07] He tells us that the outcome of the substitutionary work of Christ is that their condemnation has been born. They are no longer offenders at law.

The law has nothing against them. They are justified freely by God's grace in reference to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

But also he is telling us the outcome of the work of Christ is that his people have outlawed sin. They are no longer under its dominion.

Its reigning power, its dominion has gone. they in Christ have condemned sin in the flesh. God has achieved his purpose.

The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. What Paul is telling us is that the reigning power of sin has been broken.

[26 : 16] no longer are we under its dominion. No longer dare the evil one speak to us in terms of authority and command us or our obedience because now we are the children of God.

We are indwelt by the spirit of God. We are given the energy that derives ultimately from the living person of the son of God who lives and reigns at the right hand of God.

The spirit who walk this is what is given to us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh but they that are after the spirit do things of the spirit.

What Paul is concerned is that we should recognize that it is not sufficient simply to stop here when we have said there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

that is a great truth and we should never lose the sense of its majesty and we should never but be filled with gratitude for the grace that has brought us such a message as that.

[27 : 30] God. But what Paul wants us to understand is the kind of ongoing life that belongs to those who have been freed from condemnation.

Liberated for what? And liberated by whom? Liberated by God through the sacrifice of his son energized by the spirit who is sent forth into our hearts by the son of God to live well Paul tells us elsewhere we live we thus judge that if one died for all then all have died but they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for them and rose again and that's the meaning of the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Let us pray. We give thee thanks oh Lord for the word of truth for the liberation that it brings to us for the spirit of truth.

We pray that we may know his energy put forth in our lives that we may know it in the increase of our love of righteousness our love of all that brings us nearer to God in Christ.

Our love of obedience to the holy will of God. Grant us thy continued presence moment by moment in Jesus name.

[29 : 19] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.