

On the cross, Jesus covered our sin

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 August 2025

Preacher: Peter Kenny

[0 : 0 0] Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law. Rather, through the law, we become conscious of sin.

But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committedly beforehand unpunished.

He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

[1 : 1 4] Thank you, Amen. Amen. Amen. And I'd love for you to keep that open as we spend time in God's words together. Well, you might remember a few weeks ago there was a lot of anger, because it turned out that some guardee, some police men and women, weren't doing the job that they were supposed to be doing.

Now, most policemen and women do an excellent job, but there were some who weren't, so they were supposed to be catching people speeding, in other words, catching people breaking the law, and they weren't doing that.

And so there was a lot of anger, understandably so. Not only were they not doing their job, but they didn't care that their supervisors or their managers knew that they weren't doing their job.

It didn't make any difference to them. And so there was a lot of anger, not just because they weren't kind of upholding their professional responsibility. This is the job that they've been called to do, to uphold the law in this way, but also the sense of personal responsibility that went with it.

So the law of the land is there as an expression of the character of the people, in a sense. We want our roads to be a safe place.

[2 : 3 5] We want people to feel safe and to be protected as they drive on our roads. And so in one sense it expresses our concern for life and for flourishing and so on, something as simple as a speed limit.

And so as you can imagine, when it turned out that the guards, the police weren't doing their job, some of them, it was very hurtful to people. It wasn't just about breaking the law, it was a personal thing.

So you had one man who said this, as someone who lost my daughter through dangerous driving of another, this report has left me absolutely devastated.

To learn that the guardee, the police, assigned specifically to roads policing, and they're refusing to do their jobs, it's open contempt, and it's not just shocking, it's heartbreaking.

Because the law is for people's safety and well-being and health and life, and the question arose, well, what's being done to deal with this issue, that some of these police weren't doing their job.

[3 : 38] Well, the law of the land is one thing, the law of God is another thing. And this is what Paul has in mind when he says in verse 19, we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law.

Paul is drawing our attention to the law of God as a good thing, something that is intended for people to flourish and to live good lives. And as we reflect on the law of God, it raises a whole lot of questions in our mind.

Maybe the question that you have in your mind this morning is, what is God's law? How do I even know what it is? Maybe a question you have in your mind is, have I broken God's law?

Similarly to how some have broken the law of the land. Maybe a question you have in mind is, well, if I have, what can I do about it? What can I do about it if I have broken God's law?

We want to reflect on what we can do about it if we have broken God's law. And first of all, we want to think about how on the cross, Jesus covers our sin.

[4 : 51] So he covers our law-breaking. Jesus covers our sin. Sin is clearly the problem that Paul has in mind in verse 23.

He says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And when he says that we fall short of the glory of God, there is this sense in which, well, we have been created in God's image to glorify him.

And when we sin, we fall short of that. And when we sin in what we think or what we do or what we say, we also fall short of his good standard, his good law.

We break his good law when we sin. And Paul wants us to know that this is a problem, not just because of the effects of sin. And you can see that perhaps in your own life or the lives of others around you, some of the knock-on effects of sin.

But it's also a problem because it is breaking God's law. In verse 20, Paul says, And so as we read the Bible, we see God's law spelled out for us in different places.

[6 : 13] In the Ten Commandments, for example, in Jesus' teaching and elsewhere. And whether we know God's law or not, what the law does for us is it shows us that we have broken the law.

One author says it like this. Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real right and wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later.

He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one of your promises to him, he will be complaining. It's not fair.

And as we hear that, we're all thinking, I'm that man. I'm that person that's being described there. This sense of injustice when we are wronged. And yet when we wrong somebody else, we tend not to see it quite so clearly.

But when we read the Bible, it spells out God's law for us. It's not all that it does, but that is part of what it does. And so the problem is sin and not just the effects of sin, but that it is a breaking of God's law.

[7 : 25] And of course, it's a breaking of God's law. So in verse 19, at the end of the verse, it says, the whole world held accountable to God.

So they've changed the speed limits in Ireland in recent times. They've brought them down. And of course, they can change the laws of the land in that way for different reasons.

But God does not change his law. Because God's law, God's good law, expresses God's good character, his good heart. God is good and he's holy and he's just and he's fair and he's true and he's loving.

And so his law is good and holy and just and fair and true and loving. So that if you lived in a society where God's law was perfectly upheld, it would be a wonderful place to live.

Imagine a place where nobody stole. It would be a wonderful place to live. Because it reflects God's heart, his character. This is why Jesus summarizes the law as saying that it is to love God and to love our neighbor.

[8 : 34] Because it is a reflection of the fact that God loves us and wants us to live for him. You think of Jesus saying, if you love me, you will keep my commands.

There's this connection between how we live because we love God. And there's a connection between God's law and his heart. His good, pure, just, holy heart.

And so when God's law is broken and he is angry about that, it's not because he's thin-skinned. It's not because he's snowflakey. It's not just that he's an impartial judge administering a system that he doesn't care about.

He is also the offended party. God is good and it is because he is good that he commands in his law what is right. And so that's the problem, that sin is a breaking of God's law.

And it is a universal problem. In verse 23, Paul says, all have sinned. All have sinned, Paul says. And when he says that, he's not saying that all sin is equal.

[9 : 42] He's not saying that we're as bad as we could be. But he's saying that every part of every one of us has been tainted by sin. Our hearts, our souls, our minds, our will, our emotions, our bodies.

Every part of every one of us has been tainted by sin. We're not what we were created to be. And so sin is this universal problem.

And you see it all the way through the Old Testament. One author says this about the Old Testament, Sally Lloyd-Jones. She says, some people think that the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy.

The Bible does have some heroes in it. But as you'll soon find out when you read it, most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make big mistakes, sometimes on purpose.

They get afraid. They run away. And at times, they are downright mean. And you know, even as Sally Lloyd-Jones says that, written in her children's storybook Bible, that she is restraining herself from saying all that she could say about the sin that you see throughout the Old Testament in the hearts of the people.

[10 : 54] And of course, it's true all the way through history. You'll have heard maybe the quote from G.K. Chesterton, the famous one.

So I don't know all the details or if they're correct or not. But the guts of it is this. The sense of it is this. Somebody asks, what's wrong with the world? And G.K. Chesterton writes into the paper.

And he says, dear sirs, I am. You are sincerely, G.K. Chesterton. Or to put it in the more poetic language of Taylor Swift. What does Taylor Swift sing?

I should not be left to my own devices. They come with prices and vices. I end up in crisis. Isn't that an amazing lyric? I wake up screaming from dreaming.

One day I'll watch as you're leaving because you get tired of my scheming. It's me. Hi, I'm the problem. What an honest thing to sing.

[11 : 54] She says, I'll stare directly at the sun, but never in the mirror. This is the problem that Paul highlights, the sin that's in our hearts. And maybe people don't use the word sin, but that's the problem.

And you know how it goes with kids? They make great lawyers if they're representing themselves. And everybody else is to be convicted.

If they need to defend themselves, they'd be brilliant lawyers. They deny it. They deceive it. They defend. They cover it up. And they accuse everyone else. He did this.

She did this. Yeah, but what did you do? No, but they did this. Yeah, but what did you do? And it's the hardest question to get answered sometimes. And you know what's true of kids is true of us, isn't it?

We've the exact same hearts, just a little bigger and just a little better at tidying up the sins that we commit, deceiving ourselves, deceiving others, denying them, downplaying them.

[13 : 01] And it's as though we're sitting in this rubbish dump, this trash heap, this refuse pile. And we pull our picnic out of our rucksack and we want to have a picnic in the middle of a rubbish dump and we put out a little placemat on top of all the rubbish.

And we think that somehow this placemat is somehow going to clean the place up, that this is going to be enough to cover the rubbish that we're sitting in. The sins that we have committed are like this pile of rubbish that we think we can cover or downplay or deny, but we can't.

You've heard of the preacher perhaps who is driving home after church on a Sunday. It's not me, but it could be me. And he is driving home with his wife and he's reflecting on his sermon and he doesn't want to be crass about it, but he's just looking for a little bit of approval.

He's looking for a little bit of boosting his ego, a little bit of pride at play. And he tries to get about it like this. He says, Honey, how many truly great preachers do you think in the world there are in the world today?

And without missing a beat, she responds to him, Probably one less than you think. And it's hilarious because of the wife's wit.

[14 : 27] But it's horrific because of the preacher's pride. He is supposed to be exalting Jesus. And yet he is trying to put him in the spotlight.

And we all do it, don't we? The sin that bubbles away in our hearts, in our minds. And when we see it, we despair of ourselves. We try to cover it up and we fail.

And yet what does Jesus do? Jesus covers our sin. Verse 25, God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith.

God has presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement. And if you look in your footnotes, if you have the Red Church Bible, you'll see that it says the Greek for sacrifice of atonement refers to the atonement cover on the Ark of the Covenant.

So this word that's being translated sacrifice of atonement is referring to the atonement cover on the Ark of the Covenant, which is another way of speaking about the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

[15 : 41] So in the temple, this holy place in the Old Testament, you had this holier place in the middle of the temple. And in the holiest place of all, you had the Ark of the Covenant.

And in the Ark of the Covenant, you had the two tablets that God had given to Moses with the law on them. In the Ark of the Covenant, in this holy place, the holiest place.

But if you went in there, you wouldn't be able to see the tablets because there was a cover on it. The cover was called the mercy seat. And on the mercy seat, which was made out of gold, must have been an amazing thing to see, the mercy seat, which was made out of gold, blood was shed.

The high priest, once a year, went in and put blood on the mercy seat. So that if you could go in there and look at it, you wouldn't see the law, which had been broken by the people.

You would see this covering of gold with blood shed on it. And what's more important is the symbolism of it, which means that when God looks at the law, which we have broken, he instead sees this covering, this mercy seat with blood shed on it.

[17 : 13] That's the kind of symbolism that's being picked up on here so that in one sense, even though, of course, God can see everything, the broken law is invisible to him for all intents and purposes.

He sees the blood that has been shed, the mercy seat that covers this law that has been broken. And what Paul wants us to realize is that this gold mercy seat in the Old Testament was actually a symbol of what was to come in Jesus.

It was a foreshadowing of what was to come in Jesus. So this solid gold mercy seat was actually just a shadow.

It was actually a symbol of something far more concrete, far more real, far more deeply rooted. It was a symbol of the cross of Christ.

Paul says that God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, Christ as a mercy seat, Christ as the one who covers the fact that we have broken the law and he covers it by his blood.

[18 : 27] As we see in verse 25, it's through the shedding of his blood. The cross is the real thing. It is more concrete, more real, more substantial, more perfect than any block of gold with blood on it.

It is more trustworthy. We are to receive this by faith, Paul says. We can trust in what Christ has done to cover the fact that we have broken God's law and we can trust it because the eternal Son of God has shed his blood.

There is nothing greater that could have been done, nothing more sufficient, nothing more perfect, nothing more finished than what Jesus has done. What could be more effective than the blood of Jesus to cover your sins?

There is nothing in all creation that could be more effective than the blood of Jesus. As one author puts it, God doesn't forget any more than he suffers from impaired vision, but the sacrifice of Christ has so covered our sins that they are operationally invisible to God.

Our guilt no longer provokes God's right anger. And so when you think about in the Old Testament a prophet like Isaiah, he is bringing God's word to the people and this is what God says to the people, I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins no more.

[20 : 11] And you wonder how can God not remember our sins anymore. And then we come to the sacrifice of atonement of his precious son and we realize this is hell because Jesus' blood covers our sinful law-breaking.

You think of a prophet like Micah in the Old Testament where the prophet says you will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

What a wonderful image of God hurling our sin into the depths of the sea to plunge down, down, down, out of sight, out of memory. And it is an image that is fulfilled perfectly in Christ that everything we have ever thought or said or done to break God's law, he has covered it.

If you have been to Tremor Valley Park you will know that it used to be a rubbish dump. But if you go there now you see green grass and trees and people playing and having fun and you don't see any rubbish.

It has been totally covered over. And what Jesus has done is he has totally covered over our sins. so that even if we remember them God does not remember them.

[21 : 43] If you wanted to go into the place where the mercy seat was at the Ark of the Covenant if you wanted to see the tablets of the law you would have had to push the mercy seat out of the way in order to see them.

And if God wants to remember your sins if he wants to see your sins he would have to push the mercy seat out of the way in order to see them.

Which means he would have to push aside what Christ has done for you in order to see your sin. And even to say it is so unthinkable that God would push aside the precious blood of his own son which has covered your sin perfectly.

our sins have been covered by Jesus they have been forgotten by God so that we can sing my sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought my sin not in part but the whole is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more praise the Lord praise the Lord oh my soul and so though our sins and our hearts may condemn us we need to remember that Jesus has covered our sins God can't see them anymore he doesn't remember them anymore and we wouldn't believe it but for he tells us himself Jesus is a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood and so on the cross Jesus covers our sins and that's kind of picking up on this word that some theologians will use it's the idea of expiation the other word that some theologians use is the idea of propitiation which is essentially saying that on the cross

Jesus turns away God's anger Jesus turns away God's wrath so what he has done with our sin is he has covered it what he has done with God's wrath is he has turned it away he has taken it upon himself you'll remember the anger that people felt when police some police some weren't doing their job the law was broken and people felt angry and rightly so because those who were supposed to be upholding the law weren't upholding the law well here's the good news God upholds his perfect law perfectly he upholds his good law perfectly and he is rightly angry when his law is broken as one author puts it anger is the calm deliberate and proportionate way in which eternal and underlying holiness responds to sin because of what God is he hates sin he condemns sin and he opposes sin as repugnant and absolutely destructive something of this is captured years ago

[24 : 35] I was listening to an interview with a man on the radio and the man was being interviewed about the work that he did he did work with people who didn't have any housing people who lived on the streets and so on and such a lovely man such a kind man such a loving man in his voice you could hear it and the interviewer was so struck by his kindness and his love and so on he was kind of starting to wonder is there any kind of other sides to this guy and so he asked the question do you ever get angry and the man replied like this he said of course I get angry of course I get angry I get angry at the system that causes people to end up on the street I get angry of people who have choices that they can make and they won't make them people who are in power who can do something about this and they don't of course I get angry and in that moment the interviewer realizes that anger and love were not two separate things that it was because this man had such great love that he had such real anger towards injustice and law breaking and so on well God rightly is angry when his good law is broken but his anger is turned away because of what Christ has done and it needed to be turned away it needed to be dealt with because you'll see in verse 25 halfway through the verse

God did this to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished do you ever wonder as you're reading through the Old Testament and people are doing awful things where's the justice is God not going to act and do something well here's God's answer to this if they trust in him then the justice comes about through the cross of Jesus he was being patient waiting until he would send his son to deal with the sins that his people had committed in the Old Testament all the way through there's this tension building between God's justice and God's mercy which one is going to win out and the good news is neither of them wins out they are both perfectly fulfilled in Jesus so when the psalmist says do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways according to your love remember me for you Lord are good that psalmist's prayer is answered in Jesus and the cross of

Christ that turns away God's wrath from him not only on the cross does Jesus turn away God's wrath because it needed to be dealt with it's also because Jesus has died that God's wrath is turned away and we've seen this already but isn't it interesting that in verse 19 we have a situation where every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God so in verse 19 everybody is accountable to God we cannot justify our behavior and yet by the time we get to verse 26 he is the one who justifies those who have faith in Christ so something happens between verse 19 and verse 26 in verse 19 we can't even justify our own behavior we're silenced before God but by the time we get to verse 26 God justifies those who have faith in Christ and the reason he does it is because his anger has been poured out on Christ and so we are rightly justified not because of what we have done but because of what

Jesus has done his anger is turned away because Jesus has died his blood has been shed and not only is the anger of the father turned away because Jesus has died but it's also because the father wanted for his anger to be turned away he wanted for this to happen verse 24 all are justified freely by his grace whose grace God the father's grace this is the gift of God that he has given he wanted for this to be so in verse 25 it is God the father who presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement so that without compromising his justice his anger could be turned away from those who trust in him his anger is turned away because he wanted for this to be so and it is turned away because of his love when Jesus dies on the cross it is not

God the son twisting God the father's arm pleading with him to stop being angry and start being loving God always loved the world he so loved the world that he sent his son it is in love that the father the son and the holy spirit work this plan of salvation out so that God's justice could be upheld and his forgiveness could be granted to the guilty and so it is because of his love that Jesus goes to the cross and the fact that his anger has been turned away doesn't take away from his love it magnifies his love that it was just and fair and right for him to be angry towards sin and yet in his great love he sends his son to die in our place and so he shows that he is good and just and fair and the beautiful thing is that the mercy seat was hidden in the temple hardly anybody ever saw it but the cross of

[30 : 23] Christ is there for all to see as one author puts it it was so public that even the daily commuters to Jerusalem could see it and in the centuries that followed all eyes have had access to it through the gospels this is the good news of Jesus that he has covered our sins that he has turned away the anger of the father such is the great love of God for his people that he has done this for them and so when you are tempted again to be crushed and condemned and feel the shame and the guilt of your sin you can say yes I am guilty in myself but Jesus has covered my sin and the father is not going to push aside what Jesus has done in order to see my sin again it is invisible to his sight and yes it is right for God to be angry with me for how I have lived and turn my back on him but instead

Jesus has turned away that anger taken it upon himself because in the father's great love he wanted it to be so he wanted to bring us into his family and so this is what he has done for us and so we can praise father son and spirit who have worked this plan of salvation for you and for me for all who receive Jesus through faith so that our sins might be covered that the anger of the father has turned away and that we might know his great love for us today and forever and so let's pray and ask him to impress this on our hearts lord we do ask that you help us to appreciate all that christ has done for us lord that he has covered our sins and lord we didn't see jesus on the cross personally or in person and yet lord this is what you have shared with us through your words so that we might know it as the the deepest anchor of our souls the only anchor of our souls that christ's blood has been shed to cover our sin and to turn away your right anger towards our sin and father we praise you that this is your gracious gift to us we praise you lord that you were the one who presented christ as the sacrifice of atonement and we pray lord you'd help us to go on trusting him that he has done all necessary for our sin to be dealt with in jesus name amen