

Paul's Experience under Conviction of Sin

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[0 : 00] Welcome to our services today. And as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing upon his Word. Let us pray.

Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks unto thee today for the great privilege that thou hast bestowed upon us when we can come together in an act of worship, when we can come together around thine own Word.

O Lord, we pray that thou would look down from heaven, from the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory, and grant to us thine own blessing, so that we may come, O Lord, to worship thee in an acceptable way, in spirit and in truth.

For we are dependent upon thee, for without thee we can do nothing. We give thanks for the revelation that thou hast given to us of thyself.

For who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of thy own heritage?

[1 : 34] Who is a God like unto thee, that retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy? Who is a God like unto thee, who is a God like unto thee, who will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea?

O Lord, we give thanks that through that revelation that we have boldness and confidence to come into thine own presence, to a throne of grace, and to seek thy mercy and thy grace to help us in our time of need.

O Lord, we pray that thy word would go forth in the power and demonstration of thine own spirit, and that it would be true of many today that they would incline their ear, and that they would come unto thee, and that they would hear, so that their soul should live.

And we give thanks for that great promise that thou hast given to those who will incline their ear and come to thee. Who will hear that thou will make with them an everlasting covenant, and even granting to them the sure mercies of David.

O Lord, we give thanks for the gospel call today, who say, Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.

[3 : 03] Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

We pray that thou would bless all thy servants who proclaim thy truth this day, and all those who will be listening to thy word.

O Lord, grant to them that their hearts may be opened, that they may truly hear thy word, and that it may be lodged in their hearts through thy Holy Spirit, that it may bring forth fruit in their lives.

We pray that thou would bless not only our own nation, but that thou would bless all nations of the earth, that thy way may be known upon earth, that thy saving health may be among all nations.

We pray that thou would bless those who are on the bed of affliction, those who are ill among us, at home, in hospital.

- [4 : 14] We pray that thine own healing hand may be upon them, if that is in accordance to thine own sovereign will. And if it be otherwise, we pray that thou would prepare them in their hearts and in their souls.
- We remember our young people and our children. And I say, O Lord, that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thine own name.
- We ask for thy blessing upon those who mourn the passing of loved ones, all that thou would draw near to them, and grant unto them the comfort that they stand in need of.
- And as we come around thy word, we seek thy blessing to be upon that portion that we shall read and that portion that we shall set aside to meditate upon.
- O Lord, apply it to our hearts through thine own spirit. We are dependent upon thee, for we acknowledge that without thee we can do nothing.
- [5 : 24] We give thee thanks for the great provision that thou hast made for us in thy Son, and for his continual ministry at thine own right hand, and the intercession that he makes on behalf of those who were given to him by thee in the covenant of redemption, and for whom he came into this world to redeem them, to deliver them from the slavery and the bondage of sin.
- O Lord, we pray that we may indeed be given that grace to humble ourselves, and to acknowledge that thou art our God, that thou art our Saviour, that thou art our refuge, that thou art our shelter.
- O Lord, we give thee thanks for the great efficacy of the finished work of Christ, O that we have been redeemed not with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish.
- We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us now as we come to wait upon thee, and all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins is in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- Amen. Let us now read the Word of God as we find it in the Book of Psalms, the Book of Psalms, and Psalm 51.
- [7 : 06] The Book of Psalms and Psalm 51. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.
- Wash me truly for mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
- Against thee the only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.
- Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
- [8 : 19] Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.
- Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
- Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.

[9 : 23] Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering. Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. Now seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn to Romans chapter 7.

Romans chapter 7, and we shall read at verse 12. Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

In Romans chapter 7, Paul turns to a subject that he has frequently spoken of, and the subject, of course, is the law.

[10 : 39] He has already stated that justification can only be experienced apart from the law. In chapter 3, in chapter 3, in chapter 3, verse 28, he says, therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Then in chapter 4, through Abraham as an example, Paul explains that we receive the promise not through the law, but by grace through faith.

What he's really pointing out to us is that the law cannot produce salvation. Paul himself thought at one time that it could, and considered that he was, according to the righteousness of the law, blameless.

And as he says here in chapter 7, there came another day in his experience, as he says, when the commandment came, and Paul realized that he could not be saved from the condemnation of the law by his own efforts, but by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

He came to realize, as we noted recently in our study on Jonah, that salvation is of the Lord. However, that does not mean that the law is useless, because the law deepens the intensity of people's awareness of sin by proving to them the serious nature of sin as a direct transgression of the law of God.

[12 : 23] Paul says, again in chapter 3, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. He says, now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Here in chapter 7, he says, I had not known sin, but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.

Again, in Galatians chapter 3, he says, wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law brings us to see ourselves as we truly are before God, that we are sinners, that we have broken the law of God, that we are under the condemnation of the law, and that we cannot save ourselves.

There as we read in Psalm 51, behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

[13 : 48] From the moment of our conception, we are sinners before God. Paul is not saying that he was not aware of the fact of sin, because we are all aware of the fact of sin.

We are all aware that certain things are wrong and sinful. There is that general knowledge of sin among mankind. But what Paul says, is that there was a time when he was unaware of the true nature of sin until the law made it clear to him.

We can all have our own notion of what sin is, but to know the true nature of sin, we are dependent upon the law of God.

Paul is not saying that people do not experience sin apart from the law, but he says they do not understand it as sin against God.

The law brings a person to say, like David, again in Psalm 51, against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

[15 : 14] Paul is saying that he would not have known sin as he knows it now, that he would not have seen himself as a sinner except for the law.

And Paul also brings before us the power of sin. We saw that sin uses the law as an opportunity, as a starting point, that sin is able to exploit the law of God.

But sin, he says, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil and desire. For apart from the law, sin was dead.

Now that does not mean that the law is sinful. It is this principle of sin that is within me and you that uses the law to produce sinful actions.

Cranfield explains, he says, the law certainly is not sin. It is true that sin has been able to exploit it for its own evil purpose to deadly effect.

[16 : 30] The serpent in the garden of Eden did not act until the commandment had been given. But once the commandment was given, Eve is tempted to covet the forbidden fruit because she saw the fruit as pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom.

The serpent saw the commandment as an opportunity that it could exploit in order to ruin mankind. This was the way sin began and the way it still operates.

It was the way that sin began in the experience of man and it is the way that sin still operates in the experience of mankind. We must come to realize that sin is far too powerful for us.

And hence we find the Christian struggle that we read of in Galatians chapter 5, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary to one to the other so that he cannot do the things that he would.

Now, we left off last week at the point where Paul introduced the idea of sin's deceptive power.

[17 : 58] For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me. Here Paul brings before us the enticing power of sin and deceiving all of us in the same way as it did Eve in the Garden of Eden of which we have just spoken.

Again, Cranfield explains how the serpent utilizes three methods to seduce Eve. First, he says, he centered only on the negative part of the commandment and ignored the positive side.

Remember that in the commandment given, the Lord said, you are free to eat from every tree. And that is included in what God commanded to man.

But the serpent, it only centered on the negative part. Secondly, he made her think that God would not punish her disobedience by death.

He says, ye shall not surely die. And thirdly, he used the commandment itself to lead her to doubt God's will and assert herself in opposing God.

[19 : 16] For God doth know that in the day ye ate thereof then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be asconced, knowing good and evil.

Sin uses the law still in the same way. It distorts and imposes a false image of the law on man's understanding.

Sin deceives man by means of the law, in particular by making use of it in order to suggest that man is in a position to fulfill it. The law was actually given by God to make people aware of their sin and bring them back to him.

But it was misused by sin for its own evil purposes. And so sin deceives mankind and makes mankind to think that he is able to fulfill it.

In practice, we can see this deceptive power of sin. The fact is that we continue sinning in spite of the consequences that we suffer after committing sin.

[20 : 35] The remorse that we may experience, the grief and the sorrow and the pain that we experience as a consequence of our sin. But in spite of the fact that we promise ourselves never again, the fact is that within a truly short time we are back committing the same sins again.

You see, it deceives us by suggesting that the law means that as long as you do certain things to the best of your ability and refrain from doing other things, that you will be right and accepted with God.

Another way by which sin deceives us is when we fall into sin and our conscience pushes us and stabs us and we say to ourselves, we have sinned.

We have failed. We are in a hopeless condition. We say to ourselves, I am losing the battle against sin. We are saying to ourselves, the struggle against sin is too much for me.

There is no point in trying any further. I might as well give up and sin again.

[21 : 53] What is the point? I will be no worse. I have already failed. I am already found in a hopeless condition.

sin. I am already found in a hopeless condition. And what sin does is, it makes us feel depressed and beaten. Sin does everything within its power to hide the grace of God from us.

A more dangerous way by which sin deceives us is by bringing us to the other extreme, which we call antinomianism, which says to us, you have sinned, you have broken God's law, but don't worry, you are a man under grace.

You have been forgiven. God is merciful. So, when you fall into sin, it doesn't matter. God will forgive you. Sin plays on the forgiveness and mercy of God.

It says, your actions do not matter, now since you are under grace. Oh, the deceptive power of sin that makes us to misuse and mishandle the law and the merciful nature of God in that way.

[23 : 17] Another favourite deceptive power of sin is to make a person hostile and aggressive against the law of God. To make a person feel that God is against them, that the law is narrow and unjust, as we have noted already, has the power to create within us a desire to do the things that the law prohibits.

When the law tells us not to do something, sin creates within us a desire to do it. The serpent comes to Eve and says, yeah, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden.

He made the forbidden fruit so desirable and by doing so, he gained his evil purpose. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

You see, sin still makes itself to look attractive and pleasant to see people. It makes the curse of this world, it makes the lusts of our flesh, it makes the desires of the flesh and of the mind so attractive as being the good life in contrast to the Christian faith, which is dull, drab, boring.

That's the image that sin conveys. Also, sin discourages any thoughts of punishment or that there is any consequences to a person's sinful actions.

[25 : 16] In the Garden of Eden, God had said, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

And as we have already noted, what did the serpent say? Ye shall not surely die. And sin still does the same. That is why people do not like or accept today to speak on punishment or eternal punishment or hell.

And so people pervert the true gospel. The claim at the cross of Golgotha on which Jesus died was only a demonstration of the great love of God.

That it was indeed. But there is another side to the cross of Golgotha. Not only was it an expression of the great love of God, but it also proclaimed substitutionary atonement.

They don't like to proclaim that God's justice was there punishing his son in order that we might be freely forgiven. They do not want to be told that there is only one way of salvation.

[26 : 43] Sin deceives as it preaches universalism. All is going to be saved. Just do your best. Now the trouble is not in the law.

The trouble is in sin. And the use that sin makes of the law of God. The power and the deceptive power of sin. So Paul concludes the section which began at verse 7 with the question, Is the law sin?

And he says, God forbid. Wherefore, the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good.

He says that the law is holy. Now, holiness is the very opposite of sin and evil.

As we know, holiness means separation. The Bible speaks of holy vessels and so on. The vessels of the tabernacle and the temple were holy vessels.

[27 : 55] That is, they were separated from all other vessels. And the law is holy as it is a revelation to us of the character of God.

Paul also says that the law is just. It is just in its demands. This is one of the things as we saw that the deceptive power of sin attempts and that very successfully to make us believe that the law is narrow and unjust.

Therefore, creates within us a desire to do the things that the law prohibits. The law is narrow and unjust. But not only is the law just in its demands on us, but remember this, it is also just in the sentence that it passes upon all sin or transgression or transgression of the law of God.

The law is plain and clear in its demands and the consequences of not meeting those demands. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.

The law is just in its demands and it is just in the sentence that it passes upon all sin. We read in the Bible that if we confess our sins, that the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[29 : 41] And God is just to forgive us our sins because of Golgotha, because of the cross of Golgotha, because of what took place in the experience and life of Jesus Christ on the cross of Golgotha.

When our sins were laid upon him, the justice of God demanded that he be punished for the sins that he voluntarily took unto himself.

And so he was punished. And so he meant with the punishment that those sins of ours deserved and he meant that in his own body on the cross of Golgotha.

You see, on the cross of Golgotha there was not simply the love of God, yes, but there was also the justice of God. And where could the love of God and the justice of God meet?

Only in one person, and that is in the person of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Where there is a demonstration of the love of God, of the grace of God, God.

[31 : 07] And there is also that demonstration of justice finding satisfaction in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Christ. Paul says that the love is not only holy and just but that it is good. It shows us what we ought to be, how we ought to live, and that living such a life would be the best conceivable life.

It shows us, amongst other things, what sin is. It gives us our knowledge of sin. It is our schoolmaster to take us to Christ. It shows us the need for a saviour who has fulfilled the law on our behalf.

A saviour who has met with its demands in human nature, the man Jesus Christ, who kept the law and met with its condemnation on behalf of all those who will put their trust in him.

Paul then answers to anyone who may conclude from what he has just been saying, that the law which is holy, just, and good, has been the cause of death for him. Was then that which is good made death unto me?

[32 : 21] God forbid. Such a thought, says Paul, is unthinkable. It is not the law that killed me, but sin. Now, you might raise an objection as you go through our study so far of Romans 7 and say, how could a holy, powerful, and righteous God allow sin to do this with his law?

We have spoken of the power of sin that uses the law as the base for his operations to create in man sinful desires. We have spoken of the deceptive power of sin.

How could God allow this? Well, here is the apostle's answer. But sin that it might appear sin, work in death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

In other words, sin was allowed to do this in order that sin might appear sin. Sin is deceitful as we have just noted.

But by using the law in this manner, sin is exposed for what it is. Sin that it might appear sin, work in death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

[33 : 47] As we have already noted, now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It is the law that truly exposes sin.

Paul has already told us that in his own experience, I had not known sin, but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.

It is the law that gives us an understanding of sin, so that sin becomes exceeding sinful. You know, sin thinks it's clever, but actually sin, by using the law, is exposing its own true nature, so that sin becomes exceeding sinful.

And that was the whole function of the law. It was never meant to save sinners. The law cannot justify us, neither can it sanctify us. It does not save, but it brings us to the Savior, in whom alone is salvation.

[35 : 11] It is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The law could not save. This was Paul's problem as a Pharisee.

He thought that the law could bring salvation, another impossibility, because the fall of man into sin and the principle of sin that is within us, render our justification by the law utterly impossible.

Salvation is a matter of grace entirely. It is not by your own efforts or achievements that we're going to attain salvation, but through the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

now we note that Paul here is speaking of past experiences. For when we were in the flesh, for I was a lie without the law once.

And so we may ask, when did this happen to Paul, the experiences that he has just been given to us? Did this happen to Paul before his experience on the road to Damascus?

[36 : 28] was Paul convicted of sin as he made his way on the road to Damascus, breathing out threatenings against the Lord and his followers? Well, Paul was a Pharisee, and as a Pharisee, he was zealous of the law, which he thought at one time he was truly keeping and therefore touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.

But when the law began to do its work upon Paul, and he saw that the law and his own achievements could not save him, there is the possibility that he hated what was happening to him, and that he bore hatred against the truth that was now being revealed to him.

So it could be that he was convicted of his sin as he made his way on the road to Damascus, breathing out threatenings against the Lord and his followers. As we listen to the experience of Christians, that seems to be the experience of some, that when they became convicted of their sin and saw the true nature of sin and saw themselves as sinners, they rebelled more against the truth that was revealed to them.

Maybe that was what was meant when the Lord said to Paul, it is hard for thee to kick against the priests. Or maybe it took place between the event that happened on the road to Damascus and the coming of Ananias to him with the comfort and encouragement of the gospel.

In Acts chapter 9, we are told, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecute us thou me?

[38 : 16] And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the priests. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

And we are told that they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And it was three days without sight, and that he neither did eat or drink. The picture given to us is a man who is very disturbed.

He is physically blind. He is astonished and amazed. He is a man who neither ate nor drank for three days. Could this be the point of his conviction and the experience that he relates to us here in chapter seven of Romans?

Well, the fact is that we do not know, and maybe it is wrong for us to speculate. But what we do know is that Paul became a new man in Jesus Christ.

The man who said, though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he are well off, he might trust in the flesh, I more. That man became the man who said, what things were gained to me, those I counted lost for Christ, and to count them but done that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

[39 : 48] Well, has this change come into your own life? Can you say, today all things are passed away? Behold, all things are become new.

now from verse 14, we enter into a new section of this chapter, which I suppose is the best known section of the chapter, and has caused much debate among people.

Now, I'm not going to look at these verses just now, as I wish to digress for a week or two, and then return to that section. We are not going to leave the letter to the Romans, but I would like to look at some verses from chapter 3 in the forthcoming week.

And then we'll come back, God willing, to chapter 7 and look at that section from verse 14 to the end of the chapter.

But I leave you today with that question that I've already asked. Has a change come into your life? Can you truly say today, all things are passed away?

[41 : 01] Yes, I have given and set aside all my trust in my own efforts and achievements. Yes, I have set aside trying to keep the law for my salvation.

Yes, I have come to realize that my own efforts and achievements will never bring me salvation. all things are passed away.

All things are become new. Yes, I see the law now as a rule of life in Christ. Yes, I see now that I need Christ, that salvation is in Christ alone, that Christ has fulfilled the law on my behalf, that I need Christ, that I need to come and bow down before the cross of Golgotha, that I need to lean upon a crucified Christ, a risen Christ.

All things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. May the Lord bless our thoughts, let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed Lord, we give thanks to thee for the provision that thou hast made for us in thy son, Jesus Christ.

Grant to us, O Lord, that that provision would be coming more precious to us from day to day, that we would indeed be among those who have set aside our own efforts and achievements to try and procure our own salvation, that we would be among those who have come to realise and to see that our salvation is of the Lord, that it is in Jesus Christ and his finished work.

[43 : 06] And we pray, O Lord, that we may lean more and more upon the finished work of our Lord and Saviour day by day. may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.