

Sin Condemned in the Flesh

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[0 : 0 0] 8 page 1 1 3 7 and want us to focus our attention this morning on verse 3 Romans chapter 8 and verse 3 for God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh those of you who belong to the Gaelic section of the congregation will know that last week we began a series of studies into this great chapter this chapter that means so much to the Lord's people because it describes to them what God has done for them in such bold and such vivid terms and it's a chapter that we return to time and time again for its majesty and its greatness so I hope that those of you who belong to the Gaelic section wouldn't mind if we continue at the moment by jumping to verse 3 I know that we haven't we haven't looked at verse 2 yet but verse 3 seems to be so appropriate for what we are doing today and it gives some continuity I think to what we're doing for God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh it's important for us first of all to try to understand the relationship which the Jewish people had to the law in the Old

Testament and it's that relationship that that Paul is referring to all the way through the letter to the Romans because for him it's important to understand how that relationship has changed not that the law has changed God's law does not change and not that the law has proved to be ineffective or or or in anything anything other than what it is he tells us himself that the law is holy and righteous and good what's changed is his relationship to God's law but it's important for us to try and understand how important God's law was for the people of Israel see for us law kind of tends to dwell in a particular sphere of life the law of criminality there's the law in which one one might break and if one breaks it then one is arrested and taken to court and either condemned or whatever but for the for the Old Testament Jew or for the Pharisee and Paul of course is never he's he's always able to remember himself as Saul of Tarsus who grew up under the law for him it was it's very important for him to be able to explain that difference of relationship and from time to time I think there are events in our lives I remember in my own life one of the events that brought this home to me was when I was about 22 years old I remember being a student at the time in Aberdeen and in the congregation that we were there one of the elders invited us one evening to his home after the evening service and I remember driving to his home in a car at the time

I drove to his home which was outside Aberdeen and I could see in my mirror that his car was right behind me all the way and it was about five miles from the church to his house that was okay except that that particular elder happened to be the chief constable of Aberdeen of Grampian region and I've never been so conscious in all my life of the need to watch my speed because I knew that right behind me driving in his car was the chief constable of Grampian region and I remember being uptight and I remember being uneasy it was one of the most difficult journeys I think I've ever made in my whole life because there was this awkwardness of being under the law I suppose I shouldn't have felt that because the law is the law no matter who's behind you and yet for that though that time for those 15 minutes or so I was so conscious of this oppression of being under the law imagine being made to feel that way for your whole life from day to day without just a policeman behind you but in the knowledge that God is watching every move you make and he knows everything about you he's watching everything that's what it was like to be a conscientious Israel Israelite in the old testament if you really took your relationship to God seriously and many people did many many of the Israelites did take their relationship to God seriously well it's this idea of being under the law that Paul is arguing with because for him the gospel has set him free from being under the law because not because the law has disappeared but because someone has kept the law and has died as the penalty which he deserved he the apostle Paul deserved and that we deserve also what is the law what do we mean by the law of God in the old testament well you have

to go back to when the children of Israel were going through the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt they stopped at Mount Sinai and there God revealed himself to Israel in a spectacular and in a fearful manner he revealed himself by commanding Israel how they must live as covenant people and there he gave through Moses he gave them what we call his law now the best way to understand it is by dividing what he gave them into two first of all he gave them what we call the moral law how they must live and that moral law is summed up in what we know as the ten commandments so the moral law is summed up in the ten commandments he also gave them in the second place the ceremonial law the process and ritual of sacrifices by which God was making provision for his people for their forgiveness for their cleansing when they broke the law so there was a two-fold giving of the law there was a two-fold law the law the law was divided into the moral law and the ceremonial law which was the sacrifices and the feasts now the ceremonial law was done away with in the sacrifice of Jesus the question is what do you do with the moral law what place does it have in my life what effect does it have what function does it now have in the world now that Jesus has come and given his life on the cross for for sin

Paul is asking the question first of all is the law sin because he tells us he argues in chapter 7 that it produces sin in him and results in death no he says the law you can't blame the law the law that the law that the law he says is holy and that's what you would expect coming from the holy God you would never expect God ever to produce anything that was less than perfect and good Paul recognizes that he says that the law is holy and righteous and good there is no way that I can blame God for giving us something that was harmful or something that was that was not good and yet the result he says the end result of the law in me is death why is that why is it that the the result of the of something that is good why is it that something which is good produces death and destruction in me that's his argument in chapter 7 and he tells us this the reason that the law produces death in me is because of my sin and the combination of the good law of God and my indwelling sin is a disastrous one it is utterly disastrous the law by itself if we there was no sin there would be no problem in listening to whatever God's demands were for us there would be no demands at all if they weren't if we weren't sinners we would happily and perfectly love to keep and live as as as God wanted us that's the way it was in Eden but because of that sin has entered into the world and spoiled and corrupted us when God's law is coupled with that sin it is utterly disastrous and results and the only end result that there is at the end of chapter 6 in Romans the wages of sin is death now it's important for us to understand that and let me give you an illustration of that which I think I hope it will go some way to to helping us to understand Paul's argument at the beginning of Romans chapter 7 recently I was driving early in the morning from Inverness to Edinburgh and it was one of these incredibly cold mornings minus 10 in Pitlochry it was unbelievable so cold that the the water in the the windscreen wash froze so every time I tried to you know of course if you're driving on these roads and that kind of weather and with the salt and the dirt and the lorries you need the windscreen wash to keep keep the winds the windscreen clear in any case it had frozen and so the dirt was building up the layer of grime was building up on the windscreen now for the most part there was no problem because you could see through it there was only a very thin layer of dirt that was building up on the windscreen and for me well just carry on you know what happened I turned the corner and there was the sun glaring through right ahead of me glaring through the windscreen I saw nothing I had to stop immediately if I had carried on death complete destruction I would have crashed I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't stopped stop in the nearest lay by you can't even you can't even look for a lay by because it's such an emergency you had to get the water but thankfully that water bottle straight out and wash the windscreen as long as the windscreen is clear that's that's you're okay now here's my point the film by itself I was saying to myself well I'll just carry on but it's when the sun shone into the window it produced death the combination of the sun and the dirty window would produce certain death now you can't blame the sun you can't say oh it was the sun's fault if I crashed the car

[12:26] I couldn't have said to the police it's the sun's fault police would have arrested me right away the fault was my windscreen and that's what Paul is saying here the law is majestic just like the sun the law is good and it produces life just like the sun God has given us the sun to produce life and to light the way for us and to help us and to give us what we need in life but yet the windscreen is the barrier between me and the way that I'm going and that's what sin is and for the most part how many of us are prepared to put up with sin aren't we that's our big problem that we're prepared to put up with sin and live for the most of our lives saying I'll just get on I'll just carry on and you ignore it until God confronts us and how does he do that by his law that's exactly what

happened to the apostle Paul and something that he recognized as good and yet there was a massive problem the massive problem was that what he recognized as something good he couldn't keep it because of sin in him and the quicker we realize that and the moment we realize that the moment we stop and the moment we realize that we need to be washed with the water to wipe the windscreen clean so that we can carry on that's what Paul is telling us here now what place then does the law have what does it have what function does it serve well first of all

Romans 7 tells us that first of all by this the knowledge by the law is the knowledge of sin look at verse 7 that the law is sin by no means if it had not been for the law I would not know have known what sin is so first the first place the law God's law has in our life is that it clarifies and identifies what lies within us that's why people are so uncomfortable with God's law why should I have been so uncomfortable to have the chief constable behind me why why should it be any more uncomfortable because I because I knew that there was only a hair's breadth between me and and breaking God's law because we always live on that point the problem is that we cross the threshold don't we every single day we cross the threshold and then we become guilty of breaking God's law and there's no excuse because we'll never be able to tell God I didn't know you can never say I didn't know God has explained very clearly in his word what he demands and what he expects of us in his law you can never plead ignorance when it comes to our sin that's the first function itself the second thing is that it produces it provokes me to sin you know the real reason that I felt and this is the same way when we when confronted with the law there's something within us that wants to break it there's something within us that wants to put the foot down and just go over the speed limit I don't know why so when you see when you see one of our professors used to tell us in the college it's something the voice within you that when you're sitting on a train and you see the notice up here do not pull this cord you want to pull it I don't know it's insane it doesn't make any sense and yet you want to pull it the very law itself that forbids you from doing something it produces something within you that there's something rebellious within you that actually wants to do what God doesn't want you to do that's where sin that's where sin rests within us it's like the story in the pilgrim's progress those of you who went through the series in the pilgrim's progress or what we did with the children some time ago will remember probably the house of the teacher the interpreter and Christian is taken into the interpreter remember the room he's taken into this room and there was dust but the dust was lying on the floor and a servant came in at that point with a broom and started sweeping the room and as soon as he did so the dust rose into the air and Christian began to choke and then another servant came in with with a bottle of water and started sprinkling the water into the air so that the dust was forced to settle once again the whole point of that story is that that's the way we are and God's law starts provoking us like the broom kick the dust into the air and what we need is the Lord Jesus to come in and to bring that new life to bring that change about us which we're set free and which we're saved from choking to death as a result of what the law does to us so that goes some way

I hope in explaining Paul's argument in chapter 7 but the great problem with the law of course is that it condemns us because this is God's law God's law says to us God in his law says to us be holy for I am holy he expects and demands absolute perfection because this is God's law and any imperfection and any sin is worthy of death the wages of sin is death and that's because we're dealing with a holy God who is ultimately holy in every possible way chapter 7 and verse 13 did that which is good then bring death to me by no means it was sin producing death in me through what is good in order that sin might be shown to be sin the one thing that the law could not do and here we come on to what we're thinking about today God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do the one thing that the law could not do what the law could not do is to save us from the curse of the law the curse of the law is death the wages of sin is death the soul that sins the Bible says it shall die why could the law not do it because it was weakened by the flesh

I've already explained how the combination of God's good and holy law and our sin is a disastrous one it always leads to death but the good news in this verse is that what the law could not do God did and explains what God did and how God did it let's just spend ten more minutes on what God did and how God did it here it tells us here God condemned sin in the flesh he condemned sin now we all know what a condemnation is we're in a court of law and of course these chapters they assume that we are in a court of law with God as a righteous judge and we know of course that in any court of law there is the trial in which the person is accused and there is the verdict in which the person is pronounced either innocent either not guilty or guilty that's the verdict but then there is the

punishment according to the if the verdict is guilty the judge then has to go on to sentencing the person and sending that person perhaps to a prison term or fining the person or whatever so there's two elements in any condemnation in a human court there is the verdict and there is the sentencing the word condemnation covers those two things the verdict guilty and the punishment whatever condemnation is these the combination of these two things if we were in God's court today [20 : 55] God's verdict on us would be guilty it would have to be because we've broken his law the sentencing would be death the wages of sin is death Romans chapter 6 verse 23 the condemnation would be what God says and what God would do but here in this verse God has condemned himself sin so that we could be set free from the guilt of sin he has condemned sin in the flesh and he tells us how he has done that he says that it was by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin let's try and explore how God came to condemn sin and what that means as far as what we are here to do in remembering the Lord's death can I say first of all can we explain first of all that when it says that when God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh that doesn't mean that he only appeared to be a human being it doesn't imply that he wasn't truly a human being he was truly a human being the New Testament and other parts it makes clear that Jesus took our nature to himself in the likeness of sinful flesh simply simply means it conveys to us it emphasised to us that if you and I lived at that time and you were to see Jesus in every point he would look an ordinary normal human being from the outside because he was a human being he took our nature and a body like ourselves to himself and that's precisely the point because God it had to be that way if someone was going to represent the human race before God

God could not condemn sin by itself sin is not some kind of abstract force sin operates within you and I in our beings in our flesh and when God condemns sin God condemns it in humanity either he condemns sin in the humanity at the last day or if his son represents us which is precisely what he did in the flesh and what this verse means is that God condemned his own son as our representative in order to condemn sin in the flesh what does in the flesh mean?

it means in Jesus flesh it means the cross it means Jesus having come into the world in our nature with the ability as we saw yesterday to feel and experience pain and sorrow and tiredness and hunger and thirst in every point like as we are we are and yet without committing one single sin in himself nevertheless perfect though he was he had to be perfect otherwise he would have been dying for his own sin he would have been suffering the wrath of God for his own sin and if he does that he can't represent anyone else he absolutely had to be perfect please don't listen to anyone that questions the perfection of Jesus the sinlessness of Jesus if Jesus is even one iota sinful we're lost but because he's perfect because he's the perfect son of God in the flesh God made him responsible for my sin he made him to be guilty and that condemnation it included those two elements

God's verdict and God's punishment the verdict was as he looked at his own beloved son the verdict of God as the righteous judge was you are guilty imagine that imagine that that God making his son it's not as if it's not as if he was guilty God made his son to be so identified with our sin that he became guilty of our sin even although he had not committed the sins that we have committed God made him guilty of that sin and the second element was the punishment the wages of sin is death so that on the cross God turned his wrath that was directed at you and I turned that wrath onto his own son and his own son as it were drank every drop of that wrath in all its awfulness and agony and pain and horror and loneliness and dereliction drank all of it instead of us having to one day drink of the wrath of God

God condemned sin in the flesh and by so doing he removed our guilt because Jesus became guilty for us I've said this before there's a vast difference between the way that God punishes condemns and the way that a condemnation in a human court takes place human court can only do so much if a person is found guilty of a certain crime say that person goes to prison that person is as guilty when they come out of prison as they were when they went in they've paid their debt to society they've paid their debt to the law but nothing that human beings can do can remove that person's guilt it's the same with all of us but this is where the Lord can the Lord can completely take away the guilt in which we stand before him today in Jesus

[27 : 24] Christ why because Jesus is our substitute Jesus has suffered the wrath and the punishment of God instead of us so that by him becoming guilty and by him suffering the completeness of God's anger we would be forgiven and when we are forgiven God literally takes our sin away sends it away and receives his people all those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as

righteous in his sight remember what the apostle says in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh we're here today because we have come to know and to receive this forgiveness that was purchased for us by

Jesus on the cross we're here today because we want to remember as never before what Jesus did in suffering the condemnation the completeness of God's wrath so that we could be set free and so that we could live in the Holy Spirit and the new life that God has given to us may God bless our time and our focus upon his word we're going to sing together