

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Key Bible Teachings: Condemnation – Genesis 3; Romans 3:23 and 8:1

Our talk this morning commences a new series on “Key Bible Teachings” covering the subjects of, condemnation, justification, sanctification, and finally glorification and salvation. Before considering the positive blessings of salvation, we need to understand why. Instead of commencing with God’s love that gave the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, we go back and answer the question “Why was salvation necessary?” We are all under God’s condemnation because of our sin! In order to appreciate God’s remedy we will seek first to understand our condition as sinners.

The origin of condemnation

One of the main features of British justice is the premise that a person is innocent until proven guilty. We may be surprised but God works on the opposite premise that people are guilty until the sentence is paid in full.

We might think that this is rather unfair until we look at the situation from God’s point of view. Where do we start? At the very beginning of time when all was perfect and there was no sin in God’s creation. It is in the Garden of Eden where God had placed Adam and Eve. This garden contained all that mankind required for a joyous, stress free and peaceful life. It was in this scene of tranquillity that God came down from heaven to communicate with Adam and Eve, probably on a daily basis each evening. When God placed Adam and Eve in this paradise, He gave them only one commandment to obey – not like the many laws that we have today.

In Genesis 3 we have the record of Adam and Eve’s failure. It starts with the introduction of the serpent (Satan in disguise) who immediately begins to question God’s motives by both his questions, e.g. “Has God said?”, and statements e.g. “You shall not surely die!” Now, God desired nothing but good for both Adam and Eve and by extension for every one that has ever lived and is currently living. There are many statements in the Bible supporting God’s good intentions, e.g. John 10:10, Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Adam and Eve considered what Satan had said as better advice than God’s word; as a result, they disobeyed God. They ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, and sinned against God. Their disobedience resulted in sin entering their lives and consequently the whole of mankind. We read of the total condemnation in Romans 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The first manifestation of sin happens immediately, they become afraid of God so they hide in the garden when God comes that evening. God immediately knows what they have done. The second manifestation of sin is to blame someone else for their failure. They did not want to be responsible for their actions. How up to date the Bible is! We are only as far as Genesis 3 and yet sin brings out one of the strongest character traits of mankind – blame someone else! Adam blames God and Eve blames the serpent.

How many times do we hear people say concerning some disaster, “It was an act of God”. Alternatively, we hear the question, “Why did God allow this to happen?” Then there are the everyday issues when something goes wrong we look for someone to blame and seek compensation – what we call the compensation culture. It is very rare that any one stands up and says plainly, “I got it wrong, it’s my fault”.

What do we find as to God’s response to Adam and Eve’s failure? First God deals with the serpent and his eventual destruction. Then God brings in hope of recovery, “the seed of the woman” a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ will be the destroyer of Satan and the provider of redemption by way of death. This is all contained in Genesis 3:14-15. God now deals with Adam and Eve. Eve’s life will change in terms of family and husband, verse 16. For Adam, no longer will the garden produce a plentiful harvest without effort; he now has to work for a living. The ground is also affected by sin and it will yield a harvest of unproductive plants. Toil and sweat became Adam’s lot, which has been true for mankind ever since. Life has become hard under sin. Both Adam and Eve believed the serpent when he said, “You will not surely die.” God reaffirms that death would come because they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree by saying “dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” Read Genesis 3:17-19. The last action in the garden is that God provides some suitable clothing for both Adam and Eve. They had attempted to clothe their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together. Fig leaves are not a suitable material to cover sin. God knows what is

required – a sacrifice. Clothing made from animal skins only comes about when the animal has been put to death. God was teaching Adam and Eve that to deal with sin, then, a sacrifice is necessary. An animal sacrifice has no lasting value. A full, complete and eternally lasting sacrifice required the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary. No other sacrifice would be acceptable to God. We see in Genesis 4:1-8 that Abel understood the significance of a sacrifice. However, Cain did not and thought he could bring to God the fruit of his own work. Let us remember that to be right with God and certain of a heavenly future we need the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our own personal Saviour. There is no other way to God. In John 14:6, Jesus states, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Finally, in Genesis 3:22-24, Adam and Eve are evicted from the garden because in the garden is the tree of life. God does not want Adam and Eve eating of that tree or they would live forever. Was that a bad thing? Yes, just think of all the situations in which mankind finds itself, illness, accidents, etc and no matter how ill or damaged we are, we would still go on living. To live forever on those terms would have been a living death! To have real life we need to repent, receive forgiveness on God’s terms and then receive eternal life with the assurance that heaven is our destination and not the lake of fire.

Before we look at the second scripture in Romans 3, it is as well to say that from Adam to the Lord Jesus Christ, God had worked tirelessly to bring before mankind the need for repentance and faith in Himself. As we look through the Bible, from Genesis onwards, we see time and again that there were those who trusted and believed God. Abraham is one such tremendous example as recorded in Romans 4:3, “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’” See also Genesis 15:6. Hebrews 11 highlights a number of people, who, like Abraham, believed God. God blessed those who believed on the basis that He would one day send His beloved Son into the world to be the true and lasting sacrifice. Just like them, we who believe today have a complete salvation, although we have not seen Jesus. 1 Peter 1:10-11 states, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.” Peter shows clearly that the Old Testament prophets spoke of things not yet seen. The whole of the Old Testament was waiting for Jesus, the fulfilment of Genesis 3:15.

God’s solution for mankind under condemnation

The second scripture to be considered is in Romans 3:23. Before looking at the setting of this verse I will read from John 3:16-18, “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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

There are a number of points to be noticed in these verses;

- God has not ceased to love mankind.
- God makes a personal sacrifice in sending His Son.
- There is a requirement upon people to believe.
- Condemnation or judgment is removed by the act of true faith, believing in God’s solution – the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Finally, the warning for those who reject or disregard God’s way of salvation – they are still under condemnation.

Let us read Romans 3:21-26 to consider in more detail God’s provision of salvation and blessing for mankind. “Now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

As previously stated, the Old Testament looked forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only person who could and would make salvation possible. Here in Romans, Paul teaches that the Law and the Prophets were a witness to the fact that Jesus the Saviour was coming and that through faith in Him a person would be made right with God and the judgment or condemnation removed forever. Verse 23 states that God sees everyone the same, “all have sinned”. As far as God is concerned, race, social standing, poverty or riches or whatever kind of religious and intellectual belief a person may have counts for nothing. Only faith in Christ Jesus has any merit before a holy God. Where sin is concerned a loving God is not soft because He will not have His righteousness compromised.

There is only one solution to be right with God, not many solutions. There is only one way to heaven, not a multitude of paths. It is by faith in Christ Jesus that we are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It is important to notice that God provides the solution, and the directions by which a person can be saved. There is a popular saying when trying to assemble a kit of furniture or an item of machinery that "if at first you don't succeed, try reading the instructions". There are so many people in this world trying to get to heaven and they have not read God's instructions – the Bible.

Now verse 25 states, "Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His (Christ's) blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." What we find in this verse is that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was always in God's mind from the beginning. Let us read from 1 Peter 1:18-21, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." God knew what Adam and Eve would do even though they had everything that they needed for a comfortable life; they still wanted more and in a sense got more than they bargained for.

Going back to Romans 3:25, we find that only the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross could propitiate or satisfy by meeting all God's holy requirements concerning sin. This sacrifice has enabled a holy God to freely forgive those who accept God's remedy by believing in Christ Jesus. God maintains His righteousness by Christ paying the penalty. God remains just or right and at the same time justifies those who come to Christ on God's terms.

Salvation not only deals with our sin that separates us from God but, as Romans 6:4 states, "Even so we also should walk in newness of life". It implies and demands a change of life style. Salvation is a positive not a passive change. We are expected to live for the One who died for us.

We are all sinners and God has provided the remedy. What next?

The certainty of freedom from sin and God's condemnation on sinners

Staying with Paul's letter to the Romans we move to chapter 8. Let us read verses 1-4, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ... 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 did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

As Paul progresses in this epistle, he deals with sins and the root principle sin and arrives at this wonderful conclusion in his teaching in 8:1. God views the believer as in Christ Jesus and forever beyond condemnation. Why? Because Jesus paid the full price and God is satisfied on every account. The believer has been set free from the principle of sin and death and now has life in Christ Jesus. How has freedom been achieved? By God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Now it is well to pause here for a moment and state categorically that Jesus did not have a sinful nature. He was every bit a human being but there was nothing about Jesus that was sinful. Jesus could not sin. There are some who teach that to be truly human it must have been possible for Jesus to sin even though He did not. This statement is wrong. That is why the Bible states clearly that Jesus was born of a virgin and was conceived by the act of the Holy Spirit and as to His nature as a conceived human being He is referred to as holy. Additionally we have the following four references to the sinless perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 2 Corinthians 5:21, Jesus – "knew no sin"
- Hebrews 4:15, Jesus was – "without sin"
- 1 Peter 2:22, Jesus – "committed no sin"
- 1 John 3:5, Jesus – "in Him there is no sin".

If Jesus had a sinful human nature, then He could not have been that perfect and acceptable sacrifice to God – there would be no salvation and everybody from the beginning of time would end up in the lake of fire.

I said at the beginning that God gave Adam and Eve only one law when they were placed in the Garden of Eden. By the time we read of the nation of Israel in the desert of Sinai, God gives them ten very specific laws to highlight His holy standard for people to live by. Paul in Romans 8:3 shows that the failure to achieve what God required was not because the laws were unachievable but that people were incapable because of sin. The ten laws showed that there was a real need for a Saviour. When Paul talks of the "flesh", he means our sinful nature which cannot do anything right at all. That is why those who believe are given a new nature, as the Lord said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again." It is by the power of the Spirit of God that we receive this new life. It is "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus", verse

2. It is only in this way that verse 4 can be true, “That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

As we close let us remind ourselves again of the positive and encouraging statement by Paul at the beginning of Romans 8, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Those who truly know the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour have a secure and eternal future with Christ in heaven. Let us therefore, live out our lives as those who have been delivered from the bondage of sin.

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