

Romans 3:19-20 **The Purpose for the Law**

We are in verses 19 through 26 but were going to take 19 and 20 this morning. Verses 19 and 20 conclude this first doctrinal section in the book of Romans. From chapter 1 verse 18 through to chapter 3 verse 20 we have The Doctrine of Condemnation. And again *condemnation* is a judicial term. The word *condemnation* means *to have a sentence, a verdict made against someone*. The whole purpose of Paul's presentation is to show that all of mankind, every human being has had already the sentence and judgment made against them by God. Not something we face later but the sentence and judgment is right now, but the actual punishment for that sentence will not be carried out until we stand before the Judge.

This last section, verses 19 and 20 of Romans chapter 3, **Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to the *ones* in the law**, that is how it literally reads, **in order that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world might become under judgment to God**. The King James uses the word *guilty*, **that all the world might stand guilty before God**. And the word *guilty* means the sentence has already been passed. Everybody lives under a sentence that has already been handed down by God. (Verse 20) **Because out of the works of law all flesh will not be justified before Him, for through law is the full-knowledge of sin**. Through the law is the full knowledge, not just partially. This Greek word has the little preposition ἐπί (epi) in front of it, showing *full knowledge*. The full picture. So verses 19 and 20 tell us the purpose for the Law.

Last week we were in the second section, the particulars of the characteristics of the natural man. That is you and I without Christ. As a matter of fact that is you and I now in the human outside of Christ. We never stop being these people or this person. We must understand that. It is not that if I receive Christ I am not this way anymore. No, this is the way I am. That is why I receive Christ. Because in the flesh I am always that way.

Paul said at the end of Romans 7 that in his evaluation he sees several laws functioning in his life and one was the law of the flesh. The law of sin that is functioning in his flesh. And in Romans 8 he says it is impossible for the flesh to obey the laws of God, because the law of sin is in our flesh. Even though in our spirit and soul we are saved the flesh still is ruled by the law of sin. It never goes away, not until we leave this body.

So it is interesting that Paul would bring up the fact in the first section. He told us in Romans chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 that the Gentile is convicted by his conscience because he has had the holiness of God manifested to his mind and heart. And now in Romans chapter 3 verse 2 he says the Jew stands guilty because the Jew has been under the law. So the Gentile is judged by his conscience when he hears the truth, and the Jew is judged because he has had the law - he has heard the law, he has studied the law, but he has not applied the law to himself.

And again last week the 14 characteristics of the indictment of God against every human being, in three categories.

I. First of all, the condition.

There are six of them beginning with verse 10.

1. **There is none righteous no not one.** Nobody is perfectly right with God, not one.

2. Secondly, verse 11, **There is no one who understands.**

We saw in I Corinthians chapter 2 verse 14 that the natural man - the person just in their natural human senses - cannot know the spiritual things of God because they are spiritually discerned and the natural man is dead spiritually to the things of God.

Paul says in Ephesians chapters 3 verse 8 that God's ways are unsearchable.

In Romans chapter 11 verse 33 he says they are past finding out.

We saw in I Corinthians chapter 2 verse 10 that God reveals the things of God to us by His Spirit. That we in the natural have no ability to understand or to know them. The natural man, the natural person does not understand the things of God. And if he tried on his own no matter how much research he does, he will never understand it.

3. Thirdly, also in verse 11, **There is no one who is seeking God out.** Well, wait a minute, what are we doing? We have lapses. Sometimes we seek God out. What he is telling us is that if Christ was not in you or if Jesus Christ was not drawing by His Spirit you would not be interested either.

4. Verse 12 fourthly, **Everyone has turned away.** Away from the things God.

5. Fifthly, **Together everyone has become useless.** Wait a minute. I do not consider myself *useless*. This is from God's standpoint. If we are not surrendered to Him and belong to Him, our life spiritually for what God designed us to be is useless.

6. Sixthly, in verse 12, **No one is doing that which is profitable (spiritually) not as many as one.** Nobody.

II. Secondly, our conversation verses 13 and 14. There are four of them.

7. Paul says that the natural man, **his throat is an open tomb** or *grave*. That is the things spoken out of our mouths destroy and kill.

8. Secondly, **Their tongue is continuously deceiving.**

9. Thirdly, **The poison of asps**, that is the Egyptian cobra, **is under their lips.**

10. Verse 14, the fourth thing, **Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.** *Cursing* being *wishing a curse on someone*. It is not swearing. Cursing is different. Curse is wishing people the worst. And **bitterness.**

III. And lastly, a person's conduct in verses 15 to 18, four things.

11. First of all, verse 15, **Their feet are swift to shed blood.** Violence.
12. Verse 16, secondly, **Destruction and misery are in their ways.** Always involved in destruction and always miserable.
13. Thirdly, verse 17, **And a way of peace they did not know.**
14. Fourthly, verse 18, **There is no fear of God before their eyes.**

Now, we look back and say that is the natural man, that is the sinner before we come to know Christ. No, that is the natural man before we come to know Christ and after we have come to know Christ. If I go by my human feelings and my human evaluation, that is who I am. If, in my human frame and in my human abilities, I try to live up to the Christian faith I will find myself forcing it, because in the natural I am not interested. I do not seek God out. I do not understand the things of God. But I am supposed to. I try. The things of the Lord are beyond the human ability. So God has an indictment - against Him, against us that is against Him.

In Romans chapter 3 verses 19 and 20 we just saw the particulars of the characteristics of the natural man. Verses 19 and 20 the purpose for the Law. A two-verse summary. First of all, he says in verse 19, **Now we know that whatever the law says it is speaking to the ones in the law.** That is how it literally reads. Positionally, *in* the law. And you might say, "Well, that has to be the Jews, right?"

The way it is worded supports what Paul said in Romans chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 about the Gentiles. **For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile either accusing them or else excusing one another.** We come across the law of God with our conscience, even when we do not come to be exposed by the law, the Torah of the Old Testament. God works in our conscience through nature, shows and reveals His greatness, His holiness. So though we as Gentiles have not been raised under the law to realize the holiness of God yet God holds responsible because He has manifested Himself.

Remember what James says in James chapter 2 verse 10 - if you violate one law, you have violated it all, because you are sinning against a person, not against rules and regulations.

So the Gentile, once God manifests Himself to the Gentile through creation, He is manifesting His greatness and His holiness. He is manifesting that I do not know Him. There is something between He and I to where I am not connected with my Creator. And if I have a good response to that which I am enlightened with, God continues to manifest to me and draw me closer to the truth.

Paul says in John chapter 3 that everyone will be judged on how they responded to the light. It will not be languages, it will be illumination. When God illumined your heart to reveal

Himself to you, where did you go? Did you run away? Did you go hide? Or were you drawn closer to the light? In John chapter 3, John continues to impress upon us that once we respond to the light He continues to draw us to the light and He reveals Himself to us. So the Gentile is judged by his conscience. He is in the law.

In Romans chapter 3 verse 2, that the Jew has unto them were committed the oracles of God. They had the law in written form. So the Gentiles will be judged according to their conscience, the Jews according to the Torah or the written law. But everything the law speaks it speaks to those who are in the law of God, that is both Jew and Gentile.

Its purpose: condemnation. Look at the end of verse 19, **In order that** (showing purpose) **every mouth might be stopped, and all of the world might become under judgment to God.** He is saying at this point in the presentation, "There is no defense." The defense cannot make a presentation. The indictment is against every person and every human being stands guilty, right now, guilty before God. And God planned it that way. So God has to take the time to reveal it to us.

He tells us in verse 20, **Because from out of the works of law every flesh will not be justified.** The English Bibles say it just the opposite: *no flesh will be justified*. It is saying the same thing but putting the negative in the different place. The word *flesh* has to do with *the human being*. If it said the word *people*, a Jewish person might say, "That must be the Gentiles." But *all flesh*, every person that claims to be a human being that has flesh, **all flesh shall not be justified from out of the works of the law before God.**

The reason, **For through the law is the full knowledge of sin.** Did you catch that? One of the great phrases in Scripture. The law was never given for people to practice and to be saved. God gave it in order to show man his condemnation. To show man he is guilty. How do you stand before God with the indictments and say, "Okay, I am going to put up a defence?" And you have no defence for any one of the indictments. God has made it so there is not even any wiggle room. Every mouth might be stopped and the whole world stand guilty under His judgment before Him. So the law has served its purpose. No one will be justified from out of the works of the law.

Now at this point I must remind you of something that we taught quite a few months ago but it is an important principle to understand from John chapter 3. Jesus said, **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up.** In the book of Numbers it tells us that the children of Israel were wandering through the wilderness and they were complaining against God. So God had snakes come out from the rocks and bite the people and as the people were dying because of the snakebites they were crying out in repentance and God told Moses to take a brass snake and put it up on a pole and everybody that looked to it by faith would be healed. The correlation is that Jesus was nailed to a cross. But just like the children of Israel in the wilderness, if they were to practice religious laws after being bitten by a snake, it would not do them any good. The venom is in their system. How do you get rid of the venom? Good works? That is not going to do any good.

You must understand that the Bible teaches that sin is a spiritual disease. Spiritual disease. You can join a church, you can do religious things but the poison and venom of sin is still there. Because it is a spiritual disease it requires a spiritual physician and spiritual measures to remove the poison. And that is through the cross of Jesus Christ. Just as a person dying of poisonous snake bite cannot save himself, neither can I are you save ourselves because sin is a spiritual disease.

God gave the law to show us what sin is. If He did not give us the law how would we know what sin is? We have no standard. So the law is God's standard of holiness. And the more we try to live it, and apply it properly, the more we see that every once in a while we are successful. Except those laws and the breaking of those laws are constantly in our minds, all the time. We rebel against the things of God. That is sin. We are constantly violating God's law. So God's law is God's standard of holiness. It represents His holiness, not a list of rules and regulations.

Secondly, as James told us in James chapter 2 verse 10, if you violate one you have broken them all. That does not seem fair except for the fact that James says, "When you break one law you have violated the holiness of God, not a set of rules."

And that is what **ἁμαρτία** (hamartia) means - the word for *sin*. It means *to fall short of the glory of God*. We will see that next week in verse 23, which is a summary statement. **All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.** We cannot compare ourselves to other people. God says, "You have to compare yourself to Me." So if I want to hold to the philosophy that I am not a sinner, I am saying that I am equal to God. I have never heard anybody do that before. I have heard people say, "Well, you know, I am a pretty good guy. And my family, we try to do good for people. So I do not see that the Lord will not take that into consideration and we get into heaven."

"Well, have you ever compared yourself to God?"

"Not even close. That is ridiculous."

"So, you have fallen short of who He is?"

"Well, of course."

That makes you a sinner. What makes you fall short of perfection? It is sin. Something has to make you fall short of perfection. And it is called *sin*. So James tells us, as well as the other writers, he tries to get it across that at we are violating the holiness of God not rules and regulations.

Then thirdly, interesting text in James - James chapter 1 verses 22 to 25. Fascinating text. I know you have heard it before. Some of you already know where this is leading but many do not. James chapter 1 verse 22 says, **But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.** Be doers of the word and not hearers only - how many times have you had someone tell you that? "You need to be doing the word."

Then he goes on to explain what it means to do the word. I guess it helps for us to read the Bible further. (Verse 23) **For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:** (verse 24) **For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and immediately he forgets what manner of man he was.** That is you and me, when we wake up in the morning and look in the mirror. All of our mirrors are broken so we do not have that problem. We looked one time, and they all broke. What does that tell you?

The Scriptures present that God's word is like a mirror. We are seeing two things in the Bible. We are seeing who God is and who I am. That is it. And in order for God to reach me with the truth He has to convince me and break through my deceptive processes to show me how much I need him. I think that is pretty good. That is a great act of love. You see, because if it were me, if I were God and you said, "I don't think I'm a sinner. I don't think I'm that bad. I'm going to heaven. I know I'm saved but I don't need the Lord." You do not have a need? I would just say, "Well, if you are not interested, see ya. I have a galaxy for you."

But what God does is He says, "You are a sinner." We say, "No, I am not. I am not that bad." That is what religion does. We have to keep our heads above water to prove to God and to show God that we are good, so that He will have mercy on us some way. We do not understand that sin is a spiritual disease.

So the person who is a hearer of the word and not a doer, is the person who looks into the glass or the mirror and he sees himself but he leaves forgetting what he saw. (Verse 25) **But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his doing.** If I see myself for who I really am, and I receive it, and apply it, that is doing the word, according to the Bible. It is not me humanly, in the human sense doing human religious physical things to obey the Bible. It is me applying to myself what God is trying to show me and with what He is trying to reach me with.

Even as a Christian, I mean how many years does it take? We can sit in church. We can study the Bible. We can realize our need for Christ. We turn right around and go out and live life as though we do not need Him. That is how deceptive sin is. "Well, I need Him to get into heaven but otherwise I do not Him," because I am busy going my own way.

He says, **For through the law is the full knowledge of sin.** That is all it is for. You cannot be made right by keeping the law because you cannot keep it. Somebody once told me, "Well, we can try." Go ahead. But we will see later on that the one who lives in it is under the curse. What happens if you try to keep it and you violate it? Then what are you going to do? You are right back where you started from again. That is why Paul is trying to show is you cannot you cannot mix law and grace. Once you go back to keeping the law than you are under judgment.

But Paul says that in Galatians chapter 3 that law was our schoolmaster, our pedagogue. We were locked up in prison until faith came. The law was our tutor to teach us and to direct us

in the right way. But then once we surrender to Christ, Paul says we are no longer under the law. It served its purpose.

So later in Romans he is going to say, **So is the law sin?** He says, **Definitely not.** Is it spiritual? Yes, it is. Very spiritual. But it is there for a reason. And the purpose is to reveal to us the full knowledge of sin. Not just general like, "Oh yes, I am a sinner and I admit that I am a sinner." Let us be specific, let us get down to details.

In fact, it was not until after about twenty years of being saved that I started realizing who a sinner is. Because I was told, "All you have to do is admit you are sinner." I never responded to that because it is like, "So, what is a *sinner*?" Nobody ever told me. So I said, "Well, okay, they know, I do not know." But I have heard other people do it. You have to admit to God you are a sinner. Okay, I am a sinner. I know I have done some wrong things in my life so I am a sinner.

No, the wrong things, that is just the symptom of sin. You are constantly affected by sin, constantly. That is why God made it in His plan that Jesus Christ would come to live within us because without His Spirit guarding us and keeping us, our flesh would just take us away. That is why religion does not work. It is only practiced certain hours during the week, and the rest of the time I am out doing my own thing.

The Christian faith is a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a surrender to Him by expressing the reception of His Spirit. As I call upon Him to save me, He promises He will save me and He will send His Spirit to live within.

But then I have a battle because my flesh still rebels against the things of God. God shows me, because I do not realize my condition nor my need, ever. Ever. And the only time God convicts me and shows me of my need it is not to condemn me but to say, "I am just letting you know, you need Me." Another act of His love and provision. We need Him. That is why He sent His Spirit to live within. We cannot live without Him. That is who a sinner is.

Lord, I just do my own thing. I am living without You. Save me. And with that call God promises to save. He saves us from ourselves. That is why the battle continues to rage on. "Alright, I have met the requirements. I am going to heaven. See ya." No, no, no, no, no. God has put His Spirit within so that He might keep us. And even by His Spirit deal with us and convict us when we are not walking with Him correctly. It is all a provision of love. For through the law is the full knowledge of sin.

But you see the Jews in their deception they thought, "Well, in the human, I will just keep the law. I have never killed anybody..." He kept his mind busy with religious practices twenty-four hours a day, he does not have time to sin, except he makes himself the biggest sinner of all: "I will do it myself." And if we understand what the law means we know that you cannot keep them. Because God does not just go by what you do in the social and outwardly, but what you think, how you feel. Because Jesus said it is out of the heart come all of the violence, and the adulteries, and the various acts of sin. The heart. God says we need a new heart. And that is what His Spirit does.

Now next week Paul is going to introduce us to the next doctrine: Justification. He has spent much time showing us how guilty we are in God's court of law. So that we can never walk away from His word and say, "Well, I did not know." But now he is going to tell us what God did about our condemnation. The fact that we have a sentence against us but God Himself came and served the sentence for us. And how that applies. How does that make us right with God? Next week as we continue.

Let's close with prayer.