

Condemnation, or the Universal Need of Righteousness

Romans 2:12-3:20

In today's passage Paul teaches us that all of mankind is under condemnation and in need of the Righteousness of God. As we have quite some verses to cover I will mostly look at the verses from this part of Scripture, so if you open your Bible at Romans 2:12 you'll be able to follow most of the sheets in your own Bible. I'll just quote a few more Scriptures for clarification and for confirmation.

Let's go to Romans 2:12

Romans 2:12-13;

- For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.
- Want allen, die zonder wet gezondigd hebben, zullen ook zonder wet verloren gaan; en allen, die onder de wet gezondigd hebben, zullen door de wet geoordeeld worden; want niet de hoorders der wet zijn rechtvaardig bij God, maar de daders der wet zullen gerechtvaardigd worden.

Let me clarify one thing first: these verses are not teaching us that you can be saved just by doing the commandments of God.

If Paul would be teaching us here that we can be saved by obeying the law he would contradict himself, because in his letter to the Ephesians he clearly teaches us that salvation is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) and so he does in this letter.

The point is, and I have said this many times before: We do not obey God in order to be saved, but because we have been saved.

James, the brother of our Lord Jesus, refers to the same thing in the verses 1:22-25 in his letter.

Let's look at the first and the last verse of that Scripture.

James 1:22, 25

- But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.
- En wees daders van het Woord en niet alleen hoorders. Anders bedriegt u uzelf.
- Hij echter die zich in de volmaakte wet verdiept, die van de vrijheid, en daarbij blijft, die zal, omdat hij niet een vergeetachtige hoorder geworden is, maar een dader van het werk, zalig zijn in wat hij doet.

This Scripture we have to understand in the same way as the verses from Romans 2:12-13.

True salvation, which causes us to become a new creation, will put a new desire in our hearts, a desire to live according to the will of God as revealed in His Word.

A picture of the truth that God did not give His commandments to us in order to be saved by keeping them is the fact that God gave His laws and commandments to the people of Israel after He had saved them from their slavery in Egypt.

Let's go back to the letter to the Romans.

Romans 2:14

- For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.
- Want wanneer heidenen, die de wet niet hebben, van nature doen wat de wet *zegt*, zijn zij, hoewel zij de wet niet hebben, zichzelf tot wet.

In the past God had revealed the law in a written form only to the people of Israel. He had given it to them as a clear guideline of how they, as His chosen people, were to serve Him and to live together with one another and with the people around them.

That was not true for the Gentiles.

But God used another way to give them the possibility to discern what was right or wrong, and He still does that.

We see that in the next verses.

Romans 2:15-16

- They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.
- Zij tonen dat het werk van de wet geschreven is in hun hart. Daar getuigt ook hun geweten van, en hun gedachten onderling beschuldigen of ook verontschuldigen elkaar. *Zo zal het gaan* op de dag wanneer God de verborgen dingen van de mensen zal oordelen door Jezus Christus, overeenkomstig mijn Evangelie.

Anybody that has a proper conscience will somehow understand even without being taught the specific commandments of God that certain things are absolutely wrong.

That is indeed the work of the law: to give us an understanding of what is right and what is wrong.

And so our conscience will reveal unto us what is right or wrong.

Of course we can ignore it and still do what is wrong, but then it will condemn us for doing something that is wrong.

Let's go to the next verses.

Romans 2:17-19

- But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,
- Zie, u wordt Jood genoemd. U steunt op de wet en roemt in God, en kent *Zijn* wil en onderscheidt wat wezenlijk is, omdat u uit de wet bent onderwezen. En u bent van uzelf overtuigd dat u een gids voor de blinden bent, een licht voor hen die in duisternis zijn,

Quite a number of Jews were proud to be a Jew and not somebody from a gentile background. Very often they would look down on gentiles.

But the apostle Paul shows in this passage that just being a Jew by birth was not going to save them. Just knowing the law and teaching others about it was not going to save them neither.

God was looking for them to actually keep His laws and commandments too.

Paul continues this argument in the following verses.

Romans 2:20-21

- an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?
- een opvoeder van onverstandigen, een leermeester van jonge kinderen, omdat u in de wet de belichaming van de kennis en van de waarheid hebt. U dan die een ander onderwijst, onderwijst u uzelf niet? U die predikt dat men niet stelen mag, steelt u *zelf*?

Here Paul gives a sincere warning to those of us that have been called to preach and teach the Word of God.

We are not just to teach it, but we are foremost called to live it out ourselves.

James, the brother of our Lord Jesus, says it in the following way (James 3:1):

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

The admonition of Paul still continues in the next verses:

Romans 2:22-24

- You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."
- U die zegt dat men geen overspel mag plegen, pleegt u *zelf* overspel? U die de afgoden verfoeit, pleegt u *zelf* tempelroof? U die in de wet roemt, onteert u God door de overtreding van de wet? Want de Naam van God wordt, zoals geschreven is, door uw toedoen gelasterd onder de heidenen.

Just as during the Old Testament days the name of God was many times blasphemed because of the way the Jewish people misbehaved themselves and broke the law of God, so we must be aware that the same thing can happen when we, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, ignore the Word of God and break His commandments in many ways.

Our way of life should be in line with what we claim to be: If we claim to be children of God we should live in the way God wants His children to live. Not doing so consistently would proof that, despite our claim to be His children, we are not His children at all.

Paul continues this argument in the next verses.

Romans 2:25-26

- For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?
- Want de besnijdenis heeft wel nut als u de wet houdt, maar als u een overtreder van de wet bent, is uw besneden zijn tot onbesneden zijn geworden. Als dan een onbesnedene de verordeningen van de wet in acht neemt, zal zijn onbesneden zijn *dan* niet tot besnijdenis gerekend worden?

Again the apostle Paul points out that our salvation by God should lead to a changed lifestyle in line with the will and word of God.

Where he speaks about the circumcision as the sign for the Jews we could think about the baptism of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our baptism is a symbol of the fact that in Christ we died to sin and were raised to a newness of life in Him.

If that is not the result of our salvation, then being baptized doesn't mean anything neither.

Paul continue his argument in the following verses.

Romans 2:27

- Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.
- En zal hij die overeenkomstig de natuur onbesneden is, *maar* die de wet volbrengt, u *dan niet* oordelen, die *mét* de letter *van de wet* en de besnijdenis een overtreder van de wet bent?

Let's continue with the verses on the next sheet.

Romans 2:28-29

- For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.
- Want niet h j is Jood die het in het openbaar is, en niet d t is besnijdenis die in het openbaar in het vlees plaatsvindt, maar h j is Jood die het in het verborgene is, en d t is besnijdenis, die van het hart is, naar de geest, niet naar de letter. Zijn lof is niet uit mensen maar uit God.

The important thing that we must understand is the fact, that our behavior should not be the result of something we do from the outside, without our heart being involved in it.

Our difference in behavior has to come from the inside, from the new heart we have received from God, a heart that longs to bring glory to God and that therefore does not rely on itself, but that does depend on the guidance and strength of God as He provides us those through the Holy Spirit.

Paul also speaks about this issue in Ephesians 4:1-3 and in Philippians 1:27. You can check that later for yourself.

Let's continue!

Romans 3:1-2

- Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.
- Wat heeft de Jood dan voor *op anderen*? Of wat is het voordeel van het besneden zijn? Veel, in alle opzichten. Want in de eerste plaats zijn hun de woorden van God toevertrouwd.

The Jewish people were chosen by God to receive the revelation of His laws and promises. As such they had a clear advantage over the gentiles who did not receive these things.

Also Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah came into the world from within the Jewish people.

Let's go to the next sheet.

Romans 3:3-4

- What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."
- Want wat *is het geval*? Als sommigen ontrouw zijn geweest, zal hun ontrouw de trouw van God toch niet tenietdoen? Volstrekt niet! Zo echter moet het zijn: God *is* waarachtig maar ieder mens een leugenaar, zoals geschreven staat: Opdat U gerechtvaardigd wordt wanneer U *rechtspreekt*, en overwint wanneer U oordeelt.

The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, makes it clear unto us, that the Jews, as Gods' chosen people did not live up to their calling. They were not faithful unto God.

But God still remained faithful. Nothing in the world could and can change that.

Therefore His judgement will always be righteous, even though people will try to argue that that is not true, as we can see for instance in the following verses.

Romans 3:5-6

- But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world?
- Als nu onze ongerechtigheid de gerechtigheid van God bevestigt, wat zullen wij *dan* zeggen? Is God onrechtvaardig als Hij toorn over *ons* brengt? Ik spreek op menselijke wijze. Volstrekt niet! Hoe zal God anders de wereld oordelen?

Let's continue with the next sheet.

Romans 3:7-8

- But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.
- Want als de waarheid van God door mijn leugen overvloediger is geworden tot Zijn heerlijkheid, waarom word ik dan toch nog als zondaar geoordeeld? En *het is* toch niet, zoals wij belasterd worden en zoals sommigen zeggen dat wij zeggen: Laten wij het kwade doen, opdat het goede *daaruit* voortkomt? De verdoemenis van hen is rechtvaardig.

We know that all people, as the descendants of Adam, are born with a sinful nature.

But that doesn't mean that God cannot hold us any longer accountable for our sinful behavior!

Even the fact that, through our sinfulness and unfaithfulness, the righteousness of God is revealed and His truth shows forth His glory, does not give us any ground of accusing God of being unfair.

We are sinners and all of us indeed deserve to be condemned by God. It is only by His grace and through the faith that He has given us, that we are saved.

Romans 3:9-10

- What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;
- Wat dan *we!*? Zijn wij voortreffelijker? Beslist niet! Wij hebben immers zojuist én Joden én Grieken beschuldigd dat zij allen onder de zonde zijn, zoals geschreven staat: Er is niemand rechtvaardig, ook niet één,

The apostle Paul himself was a Jew, and even a Pharisee, a group that had very strict rules on how to live their life as the chosen people of God.

But he concludes here, that the Jews are not any better off than the gentiles, as both groups are under the power of sin.

They too, even though they were chosen by God to be His people, had turned away from God. They were in no way any better than the gentiles.

As far as that is concerned also the Old Testament makes that very clear.

Paul continues this argument in the following verses.

Romans 3:11-12

- no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
- er is niemand die verstandig is, er is niemand die God zoekt.
- Allen zijn zij afgedwaald, samen zijn zij nutteloos geworden. Er is niemand die goeddoet, er is er zelfs niet één.

Because of these truths we indeed can say that all mankind in their unsaved state stand condemned before God.

The argument continues on the next sheet.

Romans 3:13-15

- “Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”
“The venom of asps is under their lips.”
“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
- Hun keel is een open graf, met hun tong plegen zij bedrog, addergif is onder hun lippen.
- Hun mond is vol vervloeking en bitterheid, hun voeten zijn snel om bloed te vergieten.

These verses give a clear description of all kinds of things we see going on in the world, isn't it?

The actual reason for this we see on the next sheet.

Romans 3:16-18

- in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known.”
“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
- Vernieling en ellende is op hun wegen, en de weg
van de vrede hebben zij niet gekend.
- De vreze Gods staat hun niet voor ogen.

The real cause of this problem is actually mentioned in the last verse on this sheet:

There is no fear of God before their eyes!

This is the very reason why there is so much evil in this world.

This is the very reason why some many who call themselves Christians are only so in name, but not in their heart.

Oh, that we would truly fear God.

That we would truly start to understand how holy and glorious and fearful He is. That would make a tremendous difference in the way we would approach Him.

Let's go to our last verses for today.

Romans 3:19-20

- Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
- Wij weten nu dat alles wat de wet zegt, zij dat spreekt tot hen die onder de wet zijn, opdat elke mond gestopt wordt en de hele wereld doemwaardig wordt voor God. Daarom zal uit werken van de wet geen vlees voor Hem gerechtvaardigd worden. Door de wet is immers kennis van zonde.

All of mankind is held accountable to God, no matter whether they realize and /or accept it or not.

And none of them can be justified before Him by pointing toward his works.

As we will hear next week more clearly explained, salvation is only by grace through faith.

It's not by circumcision, it's not by baptism, it's not by following a set of commandments, it's not by being a member of a certain denomination or by being a member of a church.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Let us pray!