

Last time:

WE SAW:

- \Rightarrow The seriousness of our sin <u>all of us</u> are hopelessly guilty.
- ➡ Different types of sin (including good works done with sinful motives).
- \Rightarrow The fact that we <u>need</u> to know these things, in order to understand what salvation is all about.
- God tells us these things in the Bible because of his <u>love</u> for us.

WITHOUT KNOWING THESE THINGS:

- We cannot appreciate the wonders of God's salvation, and the changes it brings to us.
- We cannot appreciate the *goodness* of the Good News.



The plight of the unsaved.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THOSE WHO DO EVIL.

 Hatred for the light. ("Light" = a symbolic reference to <u>Jesus</u>, who reveals the truth and exposes sin. God's people rejoice in the light.)

> "God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.

But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants." John 3:19–21 (NLT)

The world hates Jesus, because he testifies that what it does is evil – John 7:7.

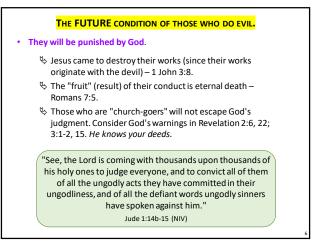
^k Those who do *evil* hate those who do *what is righteous*. Example: Cain hated (and killed) Abel – 1 John 3:12.

[Their condition NOW (continued).]

- Denying the true God by their <u>actions</u>, even though they may *claim* to know him Titus 1:16.
- Prone to hypocrisy, condemning others for sins that they also commit.

When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. Romans 2:1b (NLT)

- EXAMPLE: The religious leaders condemned their ancestors for killing the prophets... yet like their ancestors, they refused to pay attention to the prophets' message – Luke 11:47-48.
- Corrupt in their thinking. They often rejoice in their evil works like Israel did when they made the golden calf – Acts 7:41.



God graciously restrains people's sin.

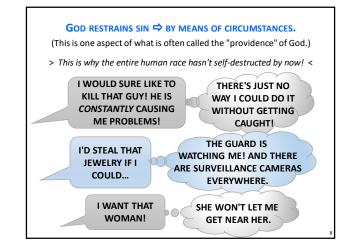
(He also did this with us who are now saved.)

It is people's nature to sin... and to deserve God's wrath.

... gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.... by nature deserving of wrath. Ephesians 2:3b (NIV)

Even so, God restrains their sin... and they should view this restraint as an act of God's <u>love</u> for them.

- <u>Even though, as sinners, people hate the true God, they should be</u> <u>thanking him for this restraint</u>! NONE of us live up to our "potential" for sinning. There are always influences that prevent us from doing so.
- God restrains people: through circumstances, and through law (an awareness of the difference between good and evil).



GOD RESTRAINS SIN ➡ BY MEANS OF LAW.

(Even though, being an external restraint, people often go against it.)

He embeds his law in people's consciences.

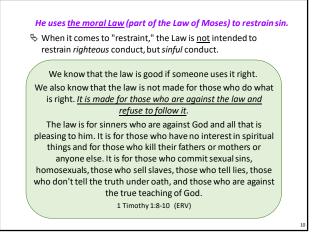
[People] demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. Romans 2:15 (NLT)

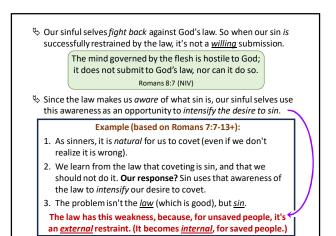
People tend to go against conscience... often to the point that it becomes corrupted (Titus 1:15) or seared (1 Timothy 4:2).

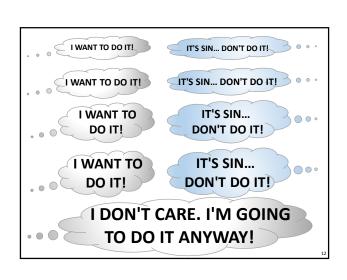
He restrains sin through laws created by people.

He uses <u>government</u> (Romans 13:1-7) – though people's natural tendency is to go against this restraint. (Corrupt governments may do the opposite ... and may persecute *righteous* conduct.)

He may use the influences of <u>society</u>, or even <u>false religion</u>, to restrain sin. [The false religion won't *save* them, though.]







Followers of Jesus do not share the plight of the unsaved.

GOD HAS RE-CREATED US; WE ARE A <u>NEW</u> CREATION!

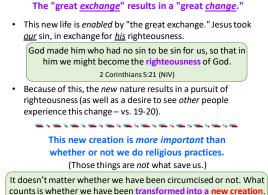
The change has already taken place in our *soul/spirit*. Our *bodies* will experience the change when Jesus returns.

What happened?

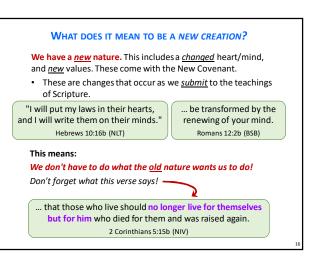
- MADE ALIVE: God *originally* created us "in his image" so that we could live for him and reflect his glory in all that we did.
- CHOOSING DEATH: Instead of fulfilling our calling, we chose to rebel against God. The "image of God" in us was marred and distorted (though not totally gone); so we can no longer fulfil the purpose for which we were created. We <u>died</u> to God, and to holiness and righteousness.
- RE-MADE ALIVE: God has offered to create us anew, to enable us to once again be <u>alive</u>, and able to fulfill our original calling.

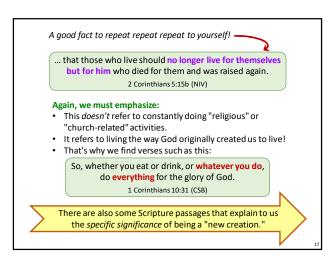


 God offers people this new life... but only those willing to accept this change will be made new. Those who choose to stay in the "old" way haven't been made "new."



Galatians 6:15 (NET)







\star This includes the pursuit of a renewed mind.

This Is the focus of Romans 12:2. It isn't merely a *suggestion*, but an *obligation* – and it will be a *reality* for those who have become new creations. (In the following passage, the emphasis is that *it* <u>is</u> happening.)

... since you have taken off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Colossians 3:9b-10 (BSB)

THIS RENEWING: \checkmark It's the means God uses to enable us to reflect his image in the way we were originally created to do.

THIS RENEWING: ✓ It's a *process*. We are *being* renewed as we pursue the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

Some of these passages mention the "old" vs. "new" self. This is connected to our being "old" vs. "new" creations. Next time, we plan to look more at this "self" concept.

IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE A NEW CREATION, YOU MAY ASK...

"Then why do I keep feeling a pull to do evil?"

We have no obligation to obey the "old self"; but it still tries to attack us through our physical bodies (which aren't renewed until the resurrection). [We plan to look more at this next time.] Also, if we aren't *pursuing* holiness, we can't expect to overcome sin.

"Do we have a choice? Can we choose to *remain* in

sin?" Do we *have* to do good things (good works, pursuit of holiness, righteousness, a renewed mind)?

It's probably better to ask, "Do we <u>want</u> to do these things?" If our lives are characterized by <u>not</u> wanting to be righteous, then there is no evidence that we have yet become <u>new</u> creations. We're still living as *old* ones!

We <u>do</u> have a choice... but <u>that choice is made at the cross</u>. Once we choose to follow Jesus, it becomes a commitment, not a choice.

"What about Christians who abandon the faith?"

This is the issue of "fake" vs. "genuine." On the surface, there are some who appear to follow Jesus... but who then turn back to their old ways. Scripture says that they were <u>never</u> changed in the first place. They are just returning to expressing their <u>real</u> selves.

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud." 2 Peter 2:21-22 (NIV)

Those who are new creations will respond in a different way.

We don't belong with those who turn back and are destroyed. Instead, we belong with those who have faith and are saved. Hebrews 10:39 (GW)



We who are new creations *know* that we are not sinless. But we are growing, and have Paul's example of how to respond to whatever may have occurred in the past.

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13b-14 (NIV)

"I was always taught that *any* stress on 'good works' means I'm trying to *earn* my salvation! How should I respond?"

Keep reminding yourself of the <u>Bible's</u> emphasis, instead. If you were raised in a church that taught such a view, it may take time for Scripture to make its full impact on you. But every step of the way can be considered a *victory* in the pursuit of the Kingdom of God. Adopt Paul's attitude (see question 4), for when you fail.

If you claim to be saved... ... then pursue the life of a saved person!

YOUR (OUR) MISSION!

After all, that's what NEW CREATIONS are made for!

⇒ Jesus Christ <u>changed</u> you, so that you no longer have to experience the plight of the unsaved!

⇒ <u>SO LIVE "CHANGED"!</u>

Credits

CRIPTURE

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