

The Condemnation of All Men (3:9-20)

- Paul rounds off his discussion of the 1st major section of Romans - the wrath of God - with a series of quotations from OT Scripture to hammer home his point that all men, Jews & Gentiles alike, are sinners in the sight of God. Paul is arguing his case like a skilled prosecutor in a courtroom.

1. The Charge: All Men Are Under Sin (3:9)

- Paul affirms that the privileges & advantages the Jews enjoyed did not make a difference between them and the Gentiles about being right with God. “*They are all under sin*” - There is no one, Jew or Gentile, who is righteous or good enough before a holy God to earn his own salvation. Paul is picturing sin as if it were a cruel dictator or harsh taskmaster, and we are under its control (6:6, 16-22).
- We are under the control or power of sin in 2 ways:
 - Man is a sinner by nature. We are born in sin, and with a sin nature (5:12-14; Jer 17:9; Ps 51:5).
 - Man is a sinner by his actions. We have offended God (3:23). We sin because we are sinners by nature. Sin is the fruit of a sinful heart (Matt 7:17-18).

2. The Evidence: Man’s Total Depravity (3:10-18)

- Paul quotes 7 OT passages in rapid-fire succession to substantiate his charge.
 - Romans 3:10-12 from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3
 - Romans 3:13 from Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140:3
 - Romans 3:14 from Psalm 10:7
 - Romans 3:15-17 from Isaiah 59:7-8
 - Romans 3:18 from Psalm 36:1
- God’s own indictment against mankind can be divided into 3 categories:
 - Verses 10 to 12 set forth the universality of sin - man’s nature:
 - V10: There is none righteous
 - V11a: There is none who understands
 - V11b: There is none who seeks out God
 - V12a: They have all turned aside from God
 - V12b: They have together become unprofitable or worthless
 - V12c: There is none who does good
 - Verses 13 and 14 focus on the sins of speech - man’s speech:
 - V13a: Their throats are like open graves
 - V13b: They deceive with their tongues
 - V13c: The poison of asps or vipers is on their lips
 - V14: Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness
 - Verses 15 to 18 give the injurious results of sin – man’s conduct:
 - V15: Their feet are swift to shed blood
 - V16: Ruin and misery mark their ways
 - V17: They do not know the way of peace

- V18: There is no fear of God before their eyes
- Warren Wiersbe calls this passage, “An X-ray study of the lost sinner, from head to foot.” The doctrine of total depravity teaches that, as a consequence of the Fall of man in Adam, every person born into the world is (i) morally corrupt or depraved; (ii) enslaved to sin; and (iii) apart from the grace of God, is utterly unable to save himself or turn to Christ in faith for salvation.
 - *Morally Corrupt or Depraved.* Because of the Fall of man in Adam, the natural man is born in sin, and every part of man - his mind, heart and will - is depraved or rendered corrupt, perverse, and sinful throughout (Ps 51:5; 58:3). We sin because we are born in sin. The depravity and sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within (Matt 15:19). Sin has affected every faculty of man – his intellect, emotions and volition. Man’s depravity is total; sin extends to the whole or totality of his being (3:10-12; Jer 17:9). No part of man is left unaffected by sin.
 - *Enslaved to Sin.* As a result of the Fall, man is not only born in sin, but he is enslaved to sin. His will is enslaved to sin or under the control of sin; he is a servant to sin and incapable of doing any spiritual good. That man’s sinfulness or depravity is universal is emphasized by 2 repeated words in 3:10-18: NONE & ALL. How many people are righteous? None! How many people are sinners? All!
 - *Unable to Save Himself.* As a result of the Fall of man, and our depravity, the natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good to save himself. Calvinism speaks of man’s “total inability.” It means that the sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation. The natural man cannot understand spiritual things, nor do anything that glorifies God because his mind is dead and his will enslaved to sin. Man is spiritually dead and unable to come to Christ (Eph 2:1; John 3:3). Left to ourselves, we will not come to Christ for salvation (Matt 22:1-14). Salvation is from its beginning to the end the sovereign work of God (John 5:40; 6:44; 6:65). The unsaved person will never come to the saving knowledge of Christ without the Spirit of God 1st making him spiritually alive. Only then can he respond to the gospel call. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (1:16); it is the power of God that makes you believe.

3. The Verdict: Guilty as Charged! (3:19-20)

- These 2 verses conclude all the arguments and inferences starting from 1:18-3:18 - that the whole world is guilty before God. This is the divine verdict as heaven’s gavel comes down hard.
 - *Man's Sinfulness is Declared by the Law* (v19). There can be no word of defence on judgment day. No unbeliever, Jew or Gentile, will have an excuse. Every mouth will be stopped because of the irrefutable indictment that the Law brings.

- *Man's Sinfulness is Condemned by the Law* (v20). No one can earn his salvation by keeping the Law (cf Jas 2:10). No one can work their way to heaven. If the Law had one purpose, it is to show us that we are guilty! God gave us the Law to be an x-ray to expose the extent of our sin and guilt, so we would see our need for His grace. The Law gives us the knowledge of sin, but it cannot save us (Jas 1:23). God gave the Law to show that man is a sinner and to drive him to Jesus (Gal 3:24).
- The verdict is clear. All men – Jews & Gentiles – have sinned and are guilty before God. All humanity is found guilty as charged and condemned to eternal death. This is why everyone needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are all sinners, lost in sin if we are without Christ. We are all vile and imperfect in the sight of God, and never good enough for Him. This is our spiritual state – totally depraved. Only a penitent sinner who trusts in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour will be saved.

Notes