


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM





THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL *EVANGELISM* FOUND IN JOHN 4, “THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.”

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

SUPPORTING THE *SOVEREIGNTY* OF GOD

1. *AN ETERNAL EXPRESSION* OF LOVE.
2. *ETERNAL* SECURITY.
3. *ELECTION* AND CHRIST.
4. *CONFORMING* TO CHRISTLIKENESS.
5. *CHRIST'S ROLE* IN THE GRACE OF GOD.
6. *FIRST*, THE *BAD* NEWS.
7. *THE UNIVERSAL GUILTY* VERDICT.

- (ROM. 2:15) also says the **HUMAN CONSCIENCE BEARS WITNESS TO THAT LAW**. So, whether the thoughts of our minds accuse or excuse us, the conscience bears witness to our guilt. No matter how hard we try to suppress, muffle, or shout down the voice of conscience, in the end, **PAUL** says, **“GOD WILL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN THROUGH CHRIST JESUS”** (ROM. 2:16).
- It is a universal dilemma. **THE WHOLE WORLD IS GUILTY BEFORE GOD** (ROM. 3:19). And **PAUL** is meticulous in making that point. **JEWES AND GENTILES ALIKE HAVE A LAW WRITTEN ON THEIR HEARTS**. The Israelites coming out of Egypt under Moses’ leadership received the law in more explicit fashion, inscribed by the finger of God on tablets of stone. Still more detailed laws and prophecies were recorded on papyrus scrolls. And today the entire Word of God is easily available to practically anyone on paper or in electronic form. **NO ONE GETS TO CLAIM IGNORANCE. AND NO ONE GETS TO CLAIM INNOCENCE.**

• But worse than that, **NO ONE** has the ability to *break free* from this sinful condition. **SIN IS A BITTER BONDAGE**, and people under the power of sin are absolutely helpless to rid themselves of guilt in this life or escape horrible judgment in the life to come. This is not a problem only for derelicts, mass murderers, evil dictators, and other especially foul types of sinners. In our natural fallen state, we **“ARE ALL UNDER SIN”** (ROM. 3:9.) And **“BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW NO FLESH WILL BE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT”** (ROM. 3:20). **THAT’S PAUL’S POINT, AND NO ONE GETS AN EXEMPTION.**

- This, then, is the clear, bottom-line, **STARTING-POINT TRUTH** in the gospel **PAUL** preached: **“ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD” (ROM. 3:23)**. No one escapes that verdict. We have no capacity to break free of our sin or eliminate its guilt. **LEFT TO OURSELVES, WE WOULD BE ETERNALLY DAMNED. AND THAT’S WHAT WE DESERVE.**
- All who come to ***genuine saving faith*** join with the penitent thief on the cross in saying **“WE ARE RECEIVING WHAT WE DESERVE FOR OUR DEEDS” AND LOOKING TO CHRIST, WHO “HAS DONE NOTHING WRONG” (LK. 23:41).**

MAN'S ENDURING *GUILT*

- **(Rom. 3:23)** is the go-to verse for a concise explanation of the human problem: ***“FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.”***
- **PAUL** could have made his argument many ways without having a New Testament at his disposal. Indeed, in the course of his epistle to the Romans, he returns to this point and sometimes brings up additional arguments that prove the sinfulness of all humanity. For example, in **(Rom. 5:14)**, he points out that ***“DEATH REIGNED FROM ADAM UNTIL MOSES”*** even before there was a written law defining what sin was. He argues that sin must be universal because death is universal. Sin is, after all, the whole reason people die. ***“DEATH [entered the world] THROUGH SIN” (ROM. 5:12). “THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH” (ROM. 6:23).*** And everyone dies. That **100** percent statistic furnishes undeniable proof that everyone is a sinner.

- **PAUL** could also have argued from the standpoint of past judgments. God drowned the entire world in a massive flood because ***“THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN WAS GREAT ON THE EARTH, AND . . . EVERY INTENT OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY”*** (GEN. 6:5). The ruthlessness and extent of human evil was clearly enormous. And then, even after the Flood had abated and **NOAH** and family rebooted the human race, the Lord said, ***“THE INTENT OF MAN’S HEART IS EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH”*** (GEN. 8:21). God subsequently destroyed the entire civilizations of ***Sodom and Gomorrah*** because ***“THE MEN OF SODOM WERE WICKED EXCEEDINGLY AND SINNERS AGAINST THE LORD”*** (GEN. 13:13).
- **PAUL** could have proved the universality of sin with an appeal to empirical evidence. ***THE PROOF OF SIN’S UNIVERSALITY IS EVERYWHERE.***


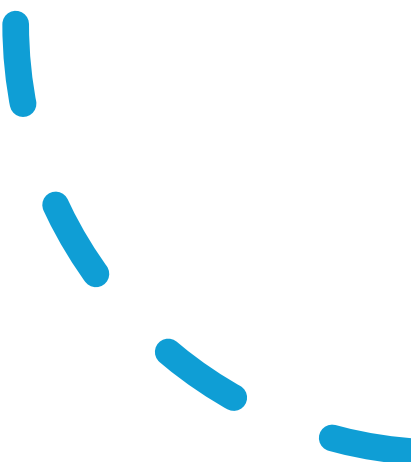
- The fruits and frustrations of sin are inevitable aspects of the human experience. No sensible, rational person would ever claim to be ***GUILT FREE***. Even those who might try to make that claim can easily detect the guilt of everyone else. And whether they know it or not, their guilt is obvious to all as well. This is one point of Christian doctrine that is not lacking for irrefutable evidence.
- ***EVERYONE SINS***. As the ***APOSTLE JOHN*** says, ***“THE WHOLE WORLD LIES IN THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE”*** (1 JOHN 5:19). Furthermore, ***“ALL THAT IS IN THE WORLD, THE LUST OF THE FLESH AND THE LUST OF THE EYES AND THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE, IS NOT FROM THE FATHER, BUT IS FROM THE WORLD”*** (1 JOHN 2:16).
- In short, ***HISTORY*** proves the universality of sin. ***SOCIOLOGY*** proves it. The ***REALITY OF DEATH*** proves it. But the most potent and enduring proof of humanity’s sinfulness is found in ***SCRIPTURE***.

Therefore, having declared the truth about sin and the human dilemma, **PAUL** proves it in the most conclusive way possible with a series of quotations from the Old Testament in **(ROM. 3:10–18)**.

He introduces this section with the words, **“AS IT IS WRITTEN . . .”** and everything that follows, through the end of **verse 18**, is either a ***direct quotation or a close paraphrase from Scripture***. He draws from numerous Old Testament sources.

- ***SO, THIS IS GOD SPEAKING THROUGH DIVINE REVELATION ABOUT THE EXCEEDING SINFULNESS OF SIN***. This is the *coup de grace* after Paul’s long discourse on sin. He could have pointed to ***history***; he could have applied a ***logical syllogism***; he could have appealed to the ***reader’s conscience***. **PAUL** was a great scholar. He might have manufactured a careful ***philosophical argument*** or quoted one of the ***ancient Greek poets***.

- **INSTEAD, HE CITES *SCRIPTURE*, BECAUSE IT IS THE WORD OF GOD.** That, by the way, is the essential strategy underlying all sound gospel proclamation with regard to how the good news is to be disseminated: ***“PREACH THE WORD . . . IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON; REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT, WITH GREAT PATIENCE AND INSTRUCTION”*** (2 TIM. 4:2). That is precisely what Paul himself does at the culmination of his discourse about sin in **Romans 3**. This is the pinnacle of his presentation.
- **HE CALLS ON *GOD* AS THE ULTIMATE *WITNESS*,** by letting the Word of God speak to the question of sin’s universality. And it is convincing. **PAUL** quotes from or alludes to a long string of Old Testament sources, including (**PSA. 5:9; 10:7; 14:1–3; 36:1–3; 53:1–3; 140:3; PROV. 1:16; ISA. 59:7–8; and JER. 5:16**). All those texts authoritatively seal the case he has spent two chapters making.

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- The ***PARADIGM PAUL*** uses is a classic legal pattern. He employs courtroom terminology and follows the course of a judicial proceeding. He puts the human race on trial. ***THERE IS AN ARRAIGNMENT. THEN AN INDICTMENT. AND FINALLY, A VERDICT.***
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THE *ARRAIGNMENT* OF MANKIND

A legal *ARRAIGNMENT* is where the accused is brought to court to answer formal charges. And that is what the **APOSTLE PAUL** did with all of humanity—all of *us*—in the **third chapter** of his epistle to the **Romans**. At this trial, the whole human race is brought before the eternal Judge. The charge against us is uttered in (ROM. 3:9): ***“WHAT THEN? ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY? NOT AT ALL; FOR WE HAVE ALREADY CHARGED THAT BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS ARE ALL UNDER SIN.”***

- ***“WHAT THEN?”*** simply means, ***“WHAT IS THE CASE?”*** How are we to understand the situation?” What follows is the answer to that question, stated ***IN GOD’S OWN WORDS.***

Bear in mind the structure of the preceding context. In (ROM. 2:12) **PAUL** states his point succinctly: ***“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.”*** THAT IS **ALL-INCLUSIVE**. It encompasses each one of us—**JEW AND GENTILE, MALE AND FEMALE, BOND AND FREE**.

- Then **PAUL** goes on to lay out the charge in meticulous detail. In (ROM. 2:14–16), he charges the **Gentiles** with sin, even though they were not directly given God’s written law. In **verses 17–29**, he charges the **Jews** with sin as ***“TRANSGRESSOR[S] OF THE LAW”*** (ROM. 2:27). In (ROM. 3:1–8), he defends the **RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AS JUDGE**. Then in **verse 9**, just before launching into that long string of Old Testament references (ROM. 3:10–18), he sums up what he has just said and reiterates the main point so no reader can possibly miss it: ***“WE HAVE ALREADY CHARGED THAT BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS ARE ALL UNDER SIN.”*** THE WHOLE WORLD IS ***“GUILTY BEFORE GOD”*** (ROM. 3:19, NKJV).

- That is **PAUL'S** formal **ARRAIGNMENT**. THE CHARGE IS **UNIVERSAL GUILT**. No human being escapes that charge. He makes the universality of sin as plain and categorical as possible, refusing to exclude even himself: **"ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY?"** (ROM. 3:9). **"WE"** is a clear reference to **PAUL** and his missionary companions—and by implication, **IT INCLUDES ALL CHRISTIANS**.
- The same pronoun (**"WE"**) is used in **verse 8** ("we are slanderously reported"; "some claim that we say"). The **"WE"** in **verse 9** clearly refers to the same people. It's a reference to those who proclaim the gospel. To paraphrase, **THOSE OF US WHO ARE MAKING THIS CHARGE, POINTING OUT THAT JEWS AND GENTILES ARE HOPELESS SINNERS—ARE WE SAYING WE'RE A SPECIAL CASE? ARE WE CLAIMING TO BE BETTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE? "NOT AT ALL"** (ROM. 3:9).

He uses an emphatic negative. **IN NO WAY DO WE THINK THAT! WE ARE WRETCHED SINNERS TOO.** Elsewhere, in (1 TIM. 1:13–15), **PAUL** describes himself as the chief of sinners—**“FORMERLY A BLASPHEMER AND A PERSECUTOR AND A VIOLENT AGGRESSOR.”** He retained a keen awareness of his own sin throughout his life. He was a mature, seasoned apostle when he wrote (ROM. 7:14): **“I AM OF FLESH, SOLD INTO BONDAGE TO SIN.” AND VERSE 24: “WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM!”**

- So, **PAUL** very acutely feels his own fallenness. He’s not setting himself up as a judge over the rest of humanity. He is merely stating the case. The entire human race is fallen and sinful, including Paul, his companions, and all believers. **WE ALL BELONG TO THE SAME SIN-CURSED RACE.**