

Romans: Unashamed; the righteous shall live by faith

Romans 3:1-20 prt 9

MPS: The whole world is accountable to God; we need a Savior

INTRO

- We want to honor our mothers today
 - We have some flowers donated by the Lewis's you can pick up in the back of the auditorium
 - "We have a photo booth set up for you and if you are a partner, please wait til after our partner meeting to have your photos taken. If you are a guest with us please feel free to get your photos taken directly after the service"
- Today finishes the section from 1:18 – 3:20 where Paul lays out his case we are all unrighteous and need saving.

OPEN

- Chapter 2 and this part of 3 are hard to teach through – not only are they a little hard to understand, this part of chapter 3 is not a popular message.
- No one will ever be invited to do a Ted Talk on total depravity and the fact that no one seeks God.
- I won't be invited to give a motivational speech about *no one does good, not even one.*"
- It is no more popular than the doctor's words: "Your tumor is malignant." "Your tumor is malignant," may or may not be hopeful news, because the doctor may or may not have a cure for your cancer. But "you are under the control of sin and totally depraved" always has a **cure**.
- Paul's goal is for people to see their sin so that they will see their need for Christ.

1. God places us in the classroom with Paul.

- Paul answers questions like he is in a dialogue with someone in order to make his point – let's sum those up into 3 questions:
 - A. What Advantage Does the Jew Have? (3:1–2)
- Remember he is still talking about what he said at the end of chapter 2.
- The Jews have the Torah but have not kept it. Now Paul says they have circumcision but have not experienced true circumcision of the heart accomplished by the Spirit of God.

- This circumcision does not involve the cutting of the body; it is a cutting away of our old nature. It is a spiritual act and refers to nothing less than salvation, effected by the Holy Spirit.
- It did not provide protection from God's wrath.

Vs 1-2 *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.*

- So, is there any advantage then, after reading chapter 2, being a Jewish person? The answer is actually YES and NO.
- In verse 2, its YES, they have special revelation – the Word of God. Paul calls it the **oracles of God**, which refers to the OT Scriptures.
- In verse 9, it's NO... **Vs 9** *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,*
- Even though the Jewish people have an advantage and privilege of possessing the Word of God, which includes God's revelation of Himself, His promises to His people, AND the promise of the Messiah, that didn't mean they were saved.

John 5:39–40 (ESV) 39 *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*

B. Does Jewish Unfaithfulness Nullify God's Faithfulness? (3:3–4)

Vs 3-4 *What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 4 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."*

- God promised to be faithful to Abraham's descendants, but Paul says the Jew is as guilty of sin as the gentile. Does the Jews' lack of faithfulness to God's promises make God unfaithful: "Absolutely not!"
- God's faithfulness is not contingent on Israel's response.
- We will go into much greater detail when we come to chapters 9-11.
- *Let God be true though every one were a liar...* If every human being who ever lived declared that God is faithless, God would be found true and every man who testified against him would be found a liar.

- At the end of vs 4, he cites Psalm 51 where David is repentant after his incident with Bathsheba and Uriah. In that Psalm, David says God’s judgment was “blameless” (Ps 51:4).
- David trusted God to judge Him justly.
- Our covenant-keeping God is faithful and just in his judgment. Aren’t you glad of that? Even when we falter, when we are faithless, HE is still faithful!
 - Faithful to forgive us,
 - faithful to never leave us,
 - faithful to keep us till the last day.

C. Are We Doing God a Favor by Sinning? (3:5–8)

Vs 5-8 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.) 6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? 8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

- Like a diamond on black felt, God’s righteousness is in contrast to our unrighteousness – making His righteousness all the more glorious and beautiful.
- Here is the point Paul is making: Why would God inflict wrath on unrighteousness (black felt) which is the very thing that is highlighting his righteousness – isn’t our sin doing God a favor here? Isn’t our sin making God look good because He is righteous in saving sinners? Why would He pour wrath on the very ones who make Him look good?
- *I speak in a human way* - the suggestion that God could be unjust reflects a sinful mind-set and calls for an immediate correction.
- In verse 7 and 8, Paul asks the same question in a different way – but it still is asking “are we doing God a favor by sinning?”
- In other words, why not be even more or darker black velvet to make God look good? If I’m doing God a favor by sinning... why would He condemn me?
- Paul says that way of thinking is slanderous and God will condemn those who believe that way with just judgment.

2. God places us in the courtroom with Paul

- Paul has taken the church in Rome and us through a classroom by question and answer (diatribe); now He is going to play the role of a theological-prophet attorney.
- He seeks to bring a verdict of “guilty” on all of humanity. His goal is for people to see their sin so that they will see their need for Christ.

A. The accusation (vs 9)

Vs 9 *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,*

- This is the first occurrence of the word ‘sin’ in Romans. Paul goes on to use that word nearly 50 times from here through chapter 8. He is charging that both religious people and raw pagans are under sin.
- To be “under sin” means that we are truly guilty of violating God’s holy law. We will be condemned when we stand before Him for judgment, unless our sins are atoned for through Christ’s blood.
- Not unlike the Jewish people, we can often think that we are not bad sinners, but more like good sinners. But if we don’t understand how bad the disease is, we won’t seek the cure!

Illustration: The late well-known preacher Harry Ironside once asked a man after a gospel meeting, “Are you saved, sir?”

“No, I really can’t say I am, but I would like to be.”

“Why would you? Do you realize you are a lost sinner?”

“Oh, of course, we’re all sinners.”

“Ah! But that often means little or nothing. Are you a sinner yourself?”

“Well, I suppose I am, but I’m not what you could call a bad sinner. I am, I think, rather a good one. I always try to do the best I know.”

Ironside went on to tell the man that there was little use in showing him the way of salvation. Good sinners are like honest liars and upright thieves: they are far from ready to admit that they are vile, hell-deserving sinners who need God’s grace to be saved

- What then is the evidence we are horrible sinners under the sin?

B. The evidence (vs 10-18)

- Paul goes through a list of OT passages to lay out the evidence we are all under sin quoted from Psalms 14, 140, 51, 107, 36 and Isaiah 59.

Vs 10-18 as it is written: *“None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” **13** “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” **14** “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” **15** “Their feet are swift to shed blood; **16** in their paths are ruin and misery, **17** and the way of peace they have not known.” **18** “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

- The Bible is not a series of little disconnected stories giving us a moral lesson. The Bible is actually a single story about what’s wrong with the world and the human race, what God has done to put that right in Jesus Christ, and finally how history then, as a result, is going to turn out in the end.
- The Bible’s answer to the question “What’s wrong with the human race?” is the word *sin* in verse 9. Paul is giving us a kind of summary statement of the biblical doctrine of sin.
- Total depravity (righteous incapability, “radical corruption”)
- The doctrine of total depravity does not mean that all humankind is as evil as it possibly could be.
- Rather, it means that sin affects the whole person. We are born corrupted, poisoned, and polluted by sin.
- Every part of man—his mind, will, emotions and flesh—have been corrupted by sin.
- Sin is so deep we are Spiritually dead
- Paul understands this doctrine because he no longer looks at Gentiles as filthy dogs, but sees them in the same category as him – lost and unrighteous in need of a Savior.
- The gospel, the doctrine of sin, has radically re-humanized the human race for Paul.
- If you believe in this doctrine of total depravity, and you think it out, it re-humanizes the human race. All kinds of people that you would have never given the time of day to, you now love and respect. **Why? Because “I’m no better.”**

- Most people view Christianity like this: “If I do this and that for God, He will do this and that for me.”
- In other words, ‘what are the good things God says I need to do in order to get the good things I want from God?’ THEN: I will follow those good things and God will be obligated to do good for me.
- The problem is that people who live ‘good’ are no better than the people who live ‘bad.’ They’re all spiritually lost. Spiritually speaking, they’re in the very same place.
- Sin is relational before it ever becomes, if it ever becomes, a behavioral thing like breaking the law. Look at the word *turn aside*. “All have turned aside ...” Even look at the word *seek*. “... there is ... no one who seeks God.”
- These are directional words. Therefore, sin is not so much a matter of whether you’re doing bad things or good things.
- There are two ways to keep God at arm’s length. One is to be a law to yourself. Live any way you want. The other is to be very, very, very good, and go to church and obey the Bible and do everything you possibly can and try to be like Jesus, so that God has to bless you, so God has to save you, in which case you’re trying to get control over God. In that case you’re not seeking God. You’re seeking things from God.
- Unless the Holy Spirit comes in to change your heart, nobody serves God for God. Nobody is really seeking God. They’re seeking things from God. Nobody even serves others, because you always serve people, you always serve God, as long as it benefits you, so you can feel good about yourself, so you can make demands, so you can feel noble. No one seeks for God. No one does good.
- It doesn’t mean nobody formally does good things. Of course, it is better to give to the poor, of course it is better to forgive somebody than it is to harm somebody or to spend all the money on yourself. I’m not saying there aren’t such things as virtuous deeds, but sin is a matter of the heart.
- Have you ever suffered? Knowing God could come in and rescue you, but it seems as if He hasn’t? Have you ever prayed to God – for something really good – only to feel like God betrayed you by not answering your prayer? Maybe it has been the most painful thing in your life and you now say, “why even pray?”
- These are the times we are tested to see if our faith is in God or is our faith in wanting God’s stuff.

- Now that everything is going wrong in your life ... now we'll find out whether you got into this faith to get God to serve you or in order to serve God. Now we'll know.
- Every single part of our heart either does bad things, or does good things in order to help myself. No one seeks for God. No one is righteous.

C. The verdict (vs 19-20)

Vs 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. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

- The word *accountable* means liable. It's a judicial word. It means liable for punishment.

Galatians 3:24–26 (ESV) **24** *So then, the law was our guardian [tutor, schoolmaster] until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*

- What he's saying is, no matter who you are, no matter what your record, no matter whether you've lived a life of altruism and compassion and service or a life of cruelty and exploitation, we're all alike.
- We're all condemned. We're all lost. We all deserve to be rejected by God. That's what he's saying.
- Right standing with God is available only for those who trust in the atoning death of Christ.

CONCLUSION

- The whole world is accountable to God; we need a Savior

every mouth may be stopped

- All you need to be a Christian is need. And Paul spent three chapters telling us of our need,

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. How is it that nobody does good? What did Paul mean?
2. How does the doctrine of total depravity (look at the definition above) 're-humanize' others in your sight?
3. What is the cure of our sin problem?