

The Apostle Paul has told his readers that the only way to be right with God is to be justified by faith. He has indicted his own people group, the Jews, who thought they were right with God through their heritage and religious rituals. He has tried to get them to see that they are as guilty as the Gentiles whom they call "sinners". He has said that Jews are guilty of the very things they accuse the Gentiles of doing. Their only advantage is that they have been given the oracles of God (3:2).

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, Romans 3:9 (ESV) Paul is driving home his point that every human is a sinner. God does not favor one race over another. God looks at the heart. He did enter a covenant with Abraham and made promises to his descendants, but most of those promises have to do with the coming of the Messiah Whom they rejected. The very Scriptures that make the Jews special are the reason they are just as bad as all other people. Having the truth makes us more accountable. Those who possess the Scriptures know right from wrong and therefore know the need God's help. They should know they fall short of God's standard.

In some ways, we who have the Word are worse off. If it was not for the fact that it is through the Word that we see the hope of forgiveness and transformation, we would live in utter despair. It is the Word that convicts us of our fallen condition, but it is also the Word that shows us the hope and freedom we can have in Christ (John 8:36). He reconciles us to God. He makes us fit to be vessels of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit transforms our life through the power of the Word (12:2). But I'm getting ahead of Paul. He is still trying to convince His readers of their sinful condition.

¹⁰ 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." Romans 3:10-12 (ESV) Whenever Paul wants to prove his point, he quotes Scripture. He is quoting portions of Psalm 14:1-3 or 53:1-3. These two psalms are identical in the first three verses. Paul is saying that if we don't believe him, we don't believe the Scriptures. Do you believe him? **Do you really think there is not a single good person in the world?**

If you walked out on the street today and asked people that question, I would guess that 9 out of 10 would say they knew there were good people and most of those would even say they were good. What would you say? Most people don't believe we are fallen in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. If we think in our own mind that we are good, if we can't see our own sin, then we will reject the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We won't recognize the need for a Savior. The enemy of the souls of mankind has done

Commented [notes1]: Romans 3:2 (ESV)

² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Commented [notes2]: John 8:36 (ESV)

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Commented [notes3]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [notes4]: Psalm 14:1-3 (ESV)

¹ The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

² The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

³ They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Commented [notes5]: Psalm 53:1-3 (ESV)

¹ The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good.

² God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

³ They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

an effective job of indoctrinating us with the idea that we are good. The philosophy of relativism encourages us to justify our sin as something that is okay for us. But then we listen to the news, hear of all the vile things happening in our world, see the politicians being politicians, an amber alert goes out almost daily, the Egyptians are killing each other, and so are the Syrians, you have to constantly watch that your identity isn't stolen, there is so much fraud and abuse of the system that we are all paying for daily, and on and on. But that is all out there. What about in your heart and mine? Is it the same in here as it is out there?

Shall we talk about lust or coveting or slothfulness or gluttony or pride? And that is not to mention all our sins of omission (James 4:17), all the things we didn't do that we should have done. And just in case you think the passage still does not apply to you, do you know the most common indictment against Israel? They would not listen to the LORD (Proverbs 1:24). Oh, they heard the words of the prophets, but they did not listen in their heart and change their ways (Jeremiah 16:12). Can anyone say that we have intently listened to what our Maker has directed us to do and then always wholeheartedly obeyed? The Biblical view is a lot harder to accept than the current cultural view, but what matters is which one is true?

Now let us read the quote again and see if we agree. ¹⁰ *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."* Romans 3:10-12 (ESV) And that is why God graciously draws our hard hearts to Himself and offers us grace and forgiveness. We would never turn to Him on our own. How many times have you seen someone out of desperation turn to God and then as soon as things got better, they didn't give Him a second thought? Perhaps it has happened in your own life.

Paul isn't done. He is going to hammer home the point. It must have been just as hard for the Jews to accept that they were sinners as it is for our culture today. What this teaches us is that man's heart is the same through the ages. Did you know that buried in the fossil record along with dinosaurs are insects and birds that are identical to the insects and birds of today?¹¹ The heart of man is identical as well. So if you are up for it, let's go on with more of Paul's quotations that were 1000 years old in his day and 3000 years old in ours.

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."* Romans 3:13-14 (ESV) A contemporary of Paul, James, the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55), wrote that no one can tame their tongue (James 3:8). No one! We may not

Commented [notes6]: James 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Commented [notes7]: Proverbs 1:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,

Commented [notes8]: Jeremiah 16:12 (ESV)

¹² and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me.

Commented [notes9]: Inspired Evidence, by Vett and Malone, p Sept 21

Commented [notes10]: Matthew 13:55 (ESV)

⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

Commented [notes11]: James 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

curse, but there are those vindictive remarks, or the gossip, or the exaggerations that we would justify to make a point. Who can say that every word from their lips is gracious (Colossians 4:6)? Paul just described our throat as an open grave and our tongue as a tool of deception. Here he is quoting Psalm 5 verse 9. That Psalm goes on to say that we use the tongue to flatter. David was talking about his enemies, but Paul is saying it is true of mankind. An open grave is a pretty descriptive metaphor!

Commented [notes12]: Colossians 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Jesus said that our words come from our heart (Matthew 12:34). Paul is bringing home his point of all mankind being under sin by touching on the subject we can easily see as sin in our own life. And because our words come from our heart, our words are indicators of how wicked our heart truly is.

Commented [notes13]: Matthew 12:34 (ESV)

³⁴ You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

The venom of asps is from Psalm 140, verse 3, and "full of curses and bitterness" is from Psalm 10, verse 7. The old sticks and stones poem is not true. Words do wound us deeply. Words shape lives for better or worse. That is because they affect the heart. Some words drive people to suicide. You probably can recall facebook related criminal charges and lawsuits over young people taking their life after being ganged up on in social media.

Commented [notes14]: Psalm 140:3 (ESV)

³ They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps. *Selah*

Commented [notes15]: Psalm 10:7 (ESV)

⁷ His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

One of the great qualities we can see in the righteous man Job was that while enduring so much loss and pain, he did not sin with his mouth. Most people would be just as the Psalmist wrote, full of curses and bitterness. He may have been bitter in his soul, but he did not allow himself to express it. Job might have had a hard time with what Paul is saying. He lived an exemplary life. God even rebuked his friends for trying to condemn him of sin. But Job was certainly not sinless. Pride in his own righteousness caused him to think he could question what God had allowed.

Paul continued with another quote. 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." Romans 3:15-17 (ESV) This time he is quoting Proverbs 1:16 and Isaiah 59:7-8. We might think that surely this is one area where we are not guilty. This is hostility toward those made in God's image. Today we see it in the abortion statistics. We can see it in the animosity towards others in our hearts. We are reminded that the Scriptures tell us that if we hate someone we have committed murder in our heart (1John 3:15). Paul is beating us down and lumping us all together as sinners in need of the saving grace of Jesus.

Commented [notes16]: Proverbs 1:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.

Commented [notes17]: Isaiah 59:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways.

⁸ The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace.

Commented [notes18]: 1 John 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Commented [notes19]: Psalm 36:1 (ESV)

¹ Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.

His last indictment is this, ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:18 (ESV) This quote Psalm 36:1 is the final nail in our coffin. If we feared the holiness and righteousness of God, we would constantly be on guard to see that our heart was right before God, listening for His voice, and yielding to His words. If we had the fear of God we would be so careful of every word that came off our lips lest God use them to

condemn us. They might reveal our ingratitude, or hatred, or even indifference. If we revered God for who He is, we'd be humbly serving those made in His image.

So this is the condition of fallen man: corrupt hearts that spout poison, lies, and selfishness, that hate our fellow man who is no less guilty before God than we are, and who don't fear the righteous response we deserve. Paul is saying we are a lot like those bratty children of parents who care so little about them that they give them whatever they demand. So they are always demanding and accusing and screaming and throwing fits. They demand that the world revolve around them. Surely we are not talking about you and me are we?

How could Paul be so honest and straight forward? It's because we are so self-centered that we think we are good. Our pride blinds us to our true condition. Paul has used the Scripture to condemn us all, but in that realization that we are all enslaved by sin (John 8:34), we can come to a right conclusion. It's a conclusion most of the world is missing today. We need a Savior! We can't do it on our own. We are wicked and have no hope of heaven without the intervention of our merciful Savior. In an age when men are teaching that Christ died on the cross simply because he was a good man ahead of his time, we need the slap in the face that the Apostle Paul gives us in this chapter. We need the reality check of Scripture. We need the fear of God!

¹⁹ 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. Romans 3:19 (ESV) Paul has used the Jews own Scriptures to say that they are guilty like the rest of the world. If anyone could be right before God, it was the Jews that have God's word. But that very word that they have condemns them. We all, Jew and Gentile, are accountable to our Creator. The mouth and eyes and ears and heart that were given to us to use for His glory, we have used rebelliously toward Him and those made in His image. We violate every command He ever gave us. We all have an enormous sin debt. We all face the wrath of God, and if justice is served on us, we are all in big trouble!

We will all stand before the Judgment Seat of God and give an account of the things done in our body, the words that we have uttered, and the thoughts we have pondered (14:10). That should put the fear of God in us, but for many, their ego won't allow it. They are so hardened they refuse to believe it will ever happen. They invent alternatives, like ceasing to exist, or getting a second go around, or being recycled as an animal. Love has warned us. Love has provided a solution. Love calls out to us if we will just humble ourselves and receive it (1Peter 5:6).

Commented [notes20]: John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

Commented [notes21]: Romans 14:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God;

Commented [notes22]: 1 Peter 5:6 (ESV)

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20 (ESV) I had a discussion once with a couple that had gone to a particular Bible College. I was preaching on salvation by faith and explaining that it was faith alone in the provision of God that saves us from Adam to the last person on earth. After the message they pulled me aside and said the Old Testament saints were saved by keeping the Law. I shared this verse and others, but they insisted that was the case because their professors had told them that was true. It can't be any clearer than this verse. The Law is impossible to keep.

What Paul is trying to get his readers to see is that you can never be good enough for God. That is because we are fallen (5:12). We have a wicked heart. We are by nature selfish. Even those who act in what appears to be selfless ways are really seeking the praise of man (Galatians 1:10) and hiding what goes on in the heart. Paul has told us that God will judge the secrets of the heart (2:16).

Our passage today ends just short of the answer that is in the next week's passage. So far we have only seen the great need that we all have. Just in case you won't be here next week, I don't want to leave you without hope. Let me share with you the opening of our passage for next week. *²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it - ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction.* Romans 3:21-22 (ESV) Paul is telling us that we could never keep the law or be good enough for our holy Creator, so God made a way for us to be acceptable. We can be righteous in God's sight if we have faith and believe in His provision for us, Jesus Christ (2Corinthians 5:21). The fact that we are as bad as God's word says we are is a hard pill to swallow and a tough message to communicate. Only the Holy Spirit can really bring conviction of sin (John 16:7-8).

The answer is so wonderfully simple for all. You don't have to be a genius or Bible scholar to understand God loves us and paid the price we couldn't pay (John 3:16-17). Jesus lived a righteous life on our behalf and then paid our sin debt for us so that we might be acceptable to God. For that, we will be eternally grateful!

Questions

- 1 Why are we better or worse for having the Word of God?
- 2 Is no one good?
- 3 Why do we need to see we are sinners?
- 4 Do you agree with Paul's descriptions?
- 5 Can mere words really do harm?
- 6 How are we violent?

Commented [notes23]: Romans 5:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...

Commented [notes24]: Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Commented [notes25]: Romans 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes26]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Commented [notes27]: John 16:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

Commented [notes28]: John 3:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

- 7 Why does Paul us so many verses?
- 8 Why should we fear God? Results?
- 9 Why is Paul so confrontational?
- 10 What can we do about these facts?