

## The law condemns everyone

The wrath of God.

1:18-32 The condemnation of the primitive pagan

2:1-16 The condemnation of the self righteous

Sophisticate

2:17-3:8 The condemnation of the Jew

**3:9-20 The condemnation of the world.**

Rom 9:9-20

9 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

What then? If you will look at the text you will see that the statement "What then?" is referring back to verses 1 and 2 of Chapter 3. Verses 1 and 2 talk about the advantage of the Jew. Vs 3-8 answer some common objections that arise from verses 1 and 2. Then Paul returns to his original flow of thought in verse 9.

The thought would flow like this. Since the Jews are advantaged by receiving the oracles of God, what then? Are we better than the non-Jews? Are we morally superior? Is that the reason that we received the law? Did God give us the law because we were better than everyone else? Or did receiving the law make us better? Did having the law cause us to become morally superior?

Now I am assuming here that when Paul says "we" he is referring to "us Jews." That is not universally accepted. But it looks to me to be the easiest interpretation.

Paul's answer to those questions? No way... not at all. That isn't at all what that means. He says that from chapter 1, 2 and 3 up to verse 8 he has already shown that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin. They are all condemned by their response to that which they knew, or at least could have known. They all have displayed their heart problem toward God.

Now remember the oracles the Jews received contain information of the condemned status of those under the hearing of those oracles. The Jews did not receive the law because they were morally superior and they certainly did not become morally superior by having it. Their actions proved the justice of their condemnation.

<sup>10</sup>As it is written:

*"There is none righteous, no, not one;*

**As it is written** is a phrase used many times in the New Testament. Christ used it often and His enemies used it as well. In our world people blither on and on about their ideas of morality, about what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. And there are times I just want to scream... Who says so? Who's authority are you quoting? Who is speaking that has the right to speak because they have created the world and therefore has a right to tell the creation what to do? Who is speaking for God and what gives them the right to do so?

Christ, who created the world, often backed up his own authority with what scripture says. Even his enemies, though dead wrong much of the time, had the good sense to quote what God had to say in their arguments. When we say "It is written" we are appealing to a true authority. We are basing our assertions on the truth of God's Word. Here Paul says It is written. He is making an argument for the sinfulness of man. He is not making a philosophical argument. He is quoting the truth as stated by the creator of man. And we are always safe, if we will do the work of properly interpreting God's word, to rely upon what He has spoken and what God inspired men to write. That is where truth is. That is where authority is.

***"There is none righteous,***

This is quoted three times in the Old Testament, though slightly differently. The Old Testament quotes say that there is

none that **do good**. So we can assume that in this instance **do good** and **righteous** are the same thing.

**no, not one**; This phrase is seen in verse 3 of Psalm 14. The writer is emphasizing the fact that there are no exceptions. Period, other than Christ.

Paul is making the point that neither Jew nor Gentile truly did good. While one could look at some of their actions and say they had a good effect, the heart's motivation was not to truly glorify God. They were not acts of love motivated by faith. In our lost state, we cannot, by this definition, do good. We cannot be righteous. All of our works are done by the flesh and are selfish in one form or another. Christ, when talking to the rich young ruler said that only God is good. This is the sense we are speaking of here. While an unbeliever may do something that has a good utilitarian effect, he cannot do an act that is intrinsically good, that is like God himself. He cannot do a good act that reflects his own true goodness. Since he has no true goodness to reflect.

<sup>11</sup> *There is none who understands;  
There is none who seeks after God.*

<sup>12</sup> *They have all turned aside;  
They have together become unprofitable;  
There is none who does good, no, not one."*

Compare this to Psalms 14, the text that Paul is quoting, and you will see some differences

Psalms 14:2-3

**Psalms says-** The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

**Paul says-** *There is none who understands;*

*There is none who seeks after God.*

Paul takes some interpretive liberties as inspired by the Holy Spirit. In Psalms the Lord looks down to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. Paul simply states what the verse goes on to state- there are none.

**Psalms says-** They have all turned aside,  
They have together become corrupt;  
There is none who does good,  
No, not one.

**Paul says-** *They have all turned aside;  
They have together become unprofitable (slightly different than corrupt);  
There is none who does good, no, not one*

Now let's go back to the Romans text.

<sup>11</sup> *There is none who understands;*

We have already seen in Chapters 1 and 2 that the problem was not the lack of information. Everyone has had enough information. They know better than they do. They are not innocent because they are not ignorant.

Understand- suniēmi to set or join together in the mind

I Cor 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

This verse describes the problem. It isn't the information that is the problem. It is the soul of the hearer that is the problem. In our regenerate state we have all we need **to** understand, but we **won't** understand.

*There is none who seeks after God.*

When we hear about all the folks who are joining cults, all the folks who are joining religious movements, those who are

zealots willing to give their lives for their religion, we can easily get the impression that people are seeking after God. But Romans tells us the truth about people. In our unregenerate states, none of us run after God. None of us seek Him. We are all like Adam and Eve. We run **from** God. We **hide** from God. We hope to avoid His intrusion into our lives. All the false religions are places to **avoid** God, places to **hide** from God, shelters for our **fleshly pride**.

I was emailing back and forth with a Muslim at one point and I laid out our need for a Savior due to sin. He flatly rejected his need for a savior. He essentially said he was proud to stand before God in his righteous state and that anyone worth their salt would do the same thing. Man's religions do not display an honest seeking for God. They are places to hide from God's true path to be right with God.

These religions were shaped by doctrines of demons to provide this distraction. The unregenerate man has nothing in Him that will draw him to God. Just like Adam, God must find us. He must hunt us down and put something in us that will draw us to Himself.

<sup>12</sup> *They have all turned aside;*

Turned Aside- Ekkline- Leaning in the wrong direction. It is used to describe a desertion in the military.

Is 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Not only do none of us in our unregenerate state seek God, we do our best to avoid God's true interaction in our lives. We don't come to the light because the light exposes our evil deeds. So we intentionally steer a course away from the light.

*They have together become unprofitable;*

They- this must refer to all mankind.

Unprofitable- the greek word used here is also used to describe sour milk that is spoiled to the point it has no good use

whatsoever. That is what we are in our unregenerate condition. We have no spiritual benefit. We cannot produce fruit. We cannot be used positively for ministry or building God's kingdom. We are without profitable use. We are in the truest spiritual sense, good for nothing.

*There is none who does good, no, not one."*

Paul here repeats what he said earlier. No one does good-chrestotes- morally upright. We have no desire or capacity to do the purely good thing or be the purely good person.

Now note in the next 5 verses all the references to human capacities and body parts. We have the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet and the eyes. It looks like the verses were picked intentionally with this theme in mind. By the time he is done you have a picture that everything the unregenerate man does with his mind and body are corrupt.

<sup>13</sup> *"Their throat is an open tomb;  
With their tongues they have practiced deceit";  
"The poison of asps is under their lips";*

*Let's compare this to the actual text it came from*

*Ps 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth;  
Their inward part is destruction;  
Their throat is an open tomb;  
They flatter with their tongue.*

*Again we see slight differences in the OT quote and Pauls interpretation. Isaiah says they flatter with their tongue. Paul says with their tongues they have practiced deceit. Flattery deceives a person for a personal advantage. Straight out honest communication would not produce the same results as flattery does, so the truth is twisted to manipulate a person into doing what we want them to do. So to say the first implies the second.*

*"Their throat is an open tomb;*

What does a tomb hold? It holds dead things. The unregenerate man has a throat that is an entrance way to spiritual deadness. So it only makes sense that that which comes out of the unregenerate throat is void of any good. Matt 15:18 tells us that the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart. Prov 10 tells us that perverted stuff comes out of the mouth of the wicked.

*With their tongues they have practiced deceit";*

Doloo- to keep deceiving. This is the word we have encountered before. It means to bait the hook. It is the process of using words to bait people in so we can use them for our own advantage.

*"The poison of asps is under their lips"; Psalms 140:3 This is a direct quote with no noticeable change.*

The unregenerate man has already been shown to be full of deceit. Here we see that he also says things that are deadly to the souls of others.

<sup>14</sup> *"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."*

Ara- cursing- means to desire the worst for a person. They make that desire public through making statements to that effect.

Pikria- bitterness- emotional hostility toward an enemy.

Let's compare the next text to the original-

Rom 3: 16*"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

<sup>16</sup> *Destruction and misery are in their ways;*

<sup>17</sup> *And the way of peace they have not known*

Isaiah 59:7 Their feet run to evil,

And they make haste to shed innocent blood;

Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity;

Wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.

<sup>8</sup> The way of peace they have not known,

And *there is* no justice in their ways;  
They have made themselves crooked paths;  
Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

Paul combines the first two thoughts of verse 7, feet that run to evil and making haste to shed innocent blood, to feet that are swift to shed blood. In Isaiah the blood is innocent blood. One cannot ascribe any good motive or mistaken attempt for justice in this. This bloodshed is merely because these folks are somehow in one's way.

Isaiah says that wasting and destruction are in their paths. Paul says Destruction and misery are in their paths.

Then both say that the way of peace they have not known.

<sup>15</sup> *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

The truth of this is best seen in those who have been given vast amounts of worldly power. You cannot study history without seeing the bloodthirsty nature of men. When given the power to, any unregenerate man would quickly resort to brutality against his fellow man. Look at Hitler and Stalin. Look at Africa on any given day. Look at Bosnia. Here we see the truth of man's character.

We can also see it clearly in the murder in America that has become an industry... killing as a source of income. I've read recently that a child in the womb in America has less chance of surviving than the men who were fighting at the fronts of World War II. That is the nature of our unregenerate state. Given absolute power, we would all show ourselves to take lives to cater to our desires.

<sup>16</sup> *Destruction and misery are in their ways*

Left unrestrained the inevitable result of our selfishness is always destruction and misery in the lives of those who depend on us. I sometimes think that God arranged marriage as a school for showing us what we really are. We can all see a trail of our own selfishness and the destruction and misery it has created on those close to us. Fortunately God is gracious and changes us for

the good. And as believers our destructive selfishness is being restrained and changed from the inside out. But any of us that are honest have got to admit that our lives are a mixed bag. While we may be found to have done some good, hopefully much good, it is also true we have sometimes destroyed and caused misery. That is the old self and that is what it does.

Left unrestrained the unregenerate man will do all kinds of evil that do little but destroy lives and distribute misery. The concentration camps of Germany and Russia are the easy examples. The homes that feature abuse after abuse are the more quiet and frequent examples.

<sup>17</sup> *And the way of peace they have not known."*

This is not so much talking about inner spiritual peace but peace between man and man. There is not a single country on earth that has a peaceful history. There has been enmity between man and man. Politics is a glaring example in our country. There is enmity due to the blind ambition of those in power. Instead of working together for a common good for those they serve, the politicians seek to carve out niches for their own personal greed.

There is also war all over the world. The unregenerate want what they want. They will not submit themselves to loving others the way they love themselves. And enmity is the result.

<sup>18</sup> *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Psalm 36:1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:

*There is no fear of God before his eyes.*

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. You cannot be spiritually smart without being scared of God. Some verses show a reverential fear. Some verses talk about shaking in your boots fear. So I think that it means a man should see who God is and what He is like and shiver in his shoes if he even thinks about crossing Him.

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

We Know- Oida To know with certainty. It only makes sense that the law speaks to those who were given the law. Who else would it be directed to.

So this set of verses was written to those who had the law, to the Jews. And it only stands to reason that if the custodians of God's oracles stand condemned in their sins, everyone else would stand under the same condemnation. No one can respond. No one can claim "unfair". We are all guilty before God.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Based on all the preceding facts and quotes from God's Word, the proof is in. The verdict is set. We have all proven what we are. And that is the real problem. So complying to the law at some point will not straighten us out. We have already proven we are sinners through and through. So to do the deeds of the law will not change the sinner that we are. We need a cure from the inside out. We need to have the law placed in our hearts. We need a new heart. We need a heart that seeks God.

No flesh, no person, will be made right with God by doing what the law says. The law is good at showing us what sin is. But is useless at making us better. It does nothing to change our hearts. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

Mike will be doing a great deal of application to our text. This morning I would like to emphasize just one thing.

Most people exhibit a great deal of blind trust in their own native ability to run their lives. They think they can discern good and evil and the proper path for their lives. They trust their seemer. There is a way that seems right to them and that is what they are going to do. They not only take that path but they defend it and justify it. Our culture has deified the process of following one's heart. And what they mean by that is to allow our strong desires to tell us what to do next.

The oracles of God cry out NO!. The end of that way is death and destruction. Man has fallen. His seeder is broken. God's word is the only lamp to our feet and light to our path.

Romans 9:1 says There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The fundamental question I am addressing is who do we trust? Who do we believe? Let's examine our lives this morning.

What does scripture say we have the power to do? What does scripture say we **MUST** do? What does scripture say **WE MUST NOT DO**?

Now what do **WE** say? How does the above list compare to our lives? What do **We** say we have the power to do? What do we say we **must** do? What do we refuse to leave undone? What are we dogmatic about doing? What do we say that we cannot do because of who we are and how we are made?

I believe much of our trouble, many of our shortcomings, much of our lack of fruitfulness is as a result of believing what we perceive over what God has said. We accept the bondage of sin in one area or another because we believe our experience over God's word. We fail to persevere in faith until our lives prove out what scripture says is true. We accept our sin like the Israelites accepted defeat when they looked into the promised land and could only focus on the difficulties and obstacles.

Think about this. Who are we believing?

Are we believing in your unrighteous, not-understanding, not seeking, wayward self that has a throat that is a gateway to dead things, a tongue that is good at deceiving, tongues as poisonous as snakes, an attitude that would condemn and kill anyone that stands in our way.

Do any of us really think that old self should influence even a second of our time? Do we really think that holdover influence in us will really do us any good?

That is the flesh in all its truth.

Why would we ever chose that over the Spirit? Why not walk in the Spirit and resist the flesh? Why not walk in true authority? The flesh has never done us any good. And God's Spirit has never done a believer any harm. May we glorify God this week by calling the flesh what it is and walking according to the Spirit.