

Universal Guilt & Total Depravity – Part 2

Studies in Romans

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As Dr. Barrett has said, a lot of folk are gone and Joan and I are soon to leave for a few weeks so this is a time with a lot of changing around and we trust you will pray for the folk who are up in Ohio. Remember all the prayer requests for the camp this week. I think, Church, we have about 68 people up at the camp, campers and workers. A lot of other people have taken that opportunity to get away on vacation and I can hardly blame them. I was in a restaurant during the week there and there were very few people in and the restaurant manager came over and said this is one of the five slowest weeks in the year. The week after graduation everybody seems to get out of town. So we are not the only place that people are forsaking. So we have a lot of folk gone, but do pray for them. This is a very important week for camp.

If you are a visitor here, just let me take a moment that I don't really have, but I will take it nonetheless to say that the Free Presbyterian youth camp is not as many others, a time of high charged emotionalism to get young people to make all sorts of decisions that will end up being nothing but frustrations to them. It is a time when they can get together, they can have fun together. They study the Scriptures together. They pray together. They hear the Word of God together and they are challenged by that Word.

When the Lord moved in a very powerful way 10 years ago at the first camp and my wife called me in the middle of the night—well, it was to her, three o'clock in the morning—and I was out in Calgary. I thought, my what has happened that I am getting a phone call from camp in the middle of the night. Who has been killed? But it was with a voice of awe just to tell me what was going on, that there were prayer meetings that couldn't be stopped and a move of God and young people praying for others. I remember well in the weeks and months that followed every sabbath evening after the service down in the gym, you know, 50 or 60 young people just without any prompting from elders, deacons, parents or anybody else, just getting down there to pray, to meet with God. And some who weren't at the camp that well remember Mike's son Chad who wasn't at the camp was coming up with eyes like saucers and saying, "We met with God down there."

That was a time. I remember talking to Dr. Allison. He had done this and I was very, very appreciative of it. As the Lord was moving, he actually took steps to lower the

emotional temperature rather than to try to ride it as a surfer rides a wave. That is very important to do because the flesh can very easily get in to destroy a work of God.

But I say that just to have you pray for what this camp is all about. This is the future of our church, not only of this church, but now of the other churches. This is where God is going to call ministers and missionaries and equip young people for the work of God. So this is a great week for fun and food and all the rest of it. The fellowship, I suppose, is the third F. Well, it is for all those things. It is a time for the Lord to lay hold of young hearts.

So do pray that this will be a great week and we will see many young people come back, you young people in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Adam and Lisa will be leaving as they will be gone before I get back. At least they hope they will. Adam has finished his seminary course and he is going up to do his internship. In Northern Ireland that is what we did with terrorists. We interned them. So I know what that says who is the terrorist there, Adam. But we are interning Adam anyway in our work in Illinois. And then Craig is due back in town tonight having served for a few months up there and Adam is going to take up that work with his internship. Pray for him and for Lisa that the Lord will bless them and use them greatly.

By the time I get back Derrick Bowman will almost be at the altar. He is just a few days to go. They have taken up [?] enjoying what freedom he has. But pray for Derrick and Lydia as they prepare for their big day up there in Winston-Salem.

Pray for the meetings in Northern Ireland. The meetings will be in John Greer's church in Ballymena. I am looking forward to those if for nothing else than just to be able to attend the prayer meetings in Ballymena. The Ballymena prayer meetings are a unique experience. These are very ordinary people, but my do they know how to pray. It is not the words they pray. It is not the eloquence. It is just they pray. This is a church with a long history of powerful prayer meetings. And God is answering their prayers and that church in Ballymena is enjoying a wave of revival blessing on a constant Sunday by Sunday basis. God is doing great things. So continue to pray for those meetings that the Lord will help there and do a great work and in all the other meetings that it will be my privilege to preach at.

I should clear up something. Mike keeps on saying that we are gone so you are left with the third string. You know, this is [?]. He doesn't and for those of you who haven't heard or read or seen anything of Charles Dickens and his works you have to read a little and learn of the original Uriah Heep. Then you will see MPV Uriah Barrett standing here. You know, I am so humble.

He is going to be third string. Actually he is in charge. He is going to be the man, so like I said this morning, give him a hard time. If you are going to take sick, take sick this week.

I was almost going to say if you are going to die, die this week, but I... But that would not be nice. But anything to give Mike a real hard time.

He did nearly cause Sandra to die of a heart attack. They are 32 years married just a few days ago. And for the first time in 32 years—I am going to scandalize him—he sent her a bunch of red roses. They arrived at work and she is all beaming as she might.

He said, “Now you see happy she is. If I did that every year she would be disappointed if I forgot. So I will wait until we are 50 years married before I do it again.”

So he doesn't get it. He really doesn't get it.

On a very serious note we would like you to continue to pray for Beth Lancaster. Beth is not doing well. On top of her cancer and obviously as the result of that and her surgery, for three weeks now she has really taken just about zero nutrition. She is beginning to show the signs of malnutrition and it may well be that in order for her to get enough nutrition to be able to undertake chemotherapy she will need to be re-hospitalized. We trust you will keep her in your prayers. And many people wanted to know what they can do. Can they send her this to eat or that to eat? The truth of the matter is she can't eat at all and we trust you will just make that a matter of prayer.

One other matter of prayer we have been asked to bring to your attention. That concerns the Abrams and their going to Kenya and they have a slight travel problem. British Air with whom they are booked to travel has decided they are not flying anymore into Nairobi and they can't get in touch. They can't find out who is going to fly them if they are going to send a stork or a pelican or just a raft to get them across the ocean. We don't know, but we trust they will get there. The Lord is in control of this. We will pray for Carl and his group from the university as they prepare for their mission trip to Kenya that they will be able to get there in good time and in safety.

Now let's turn again tonight as we come to a focal point really. Should I say a break at least to the focal point of our studies in the book of Romans? We reach an end of one section which will, of course, lead to the beginning of another section. We are in chapter three.

And I started last week the section from verse nine to verse 20. I didn't get it finished, obviously, and I am going to return to that this evening. And then we will find in due course that verse 21, “But now...” is the focal point not only of Romans, but of the entire biblical revelation. That, “But now...” is the great transition that we will in due time take time to notice.

But we are in Romans three verses nine to 20. We will read that portion again as we come now to hear the Word of God.

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.¹

Amen. The Lord will add his own blessing to the reading of his precious Word for his name's sake.

To get right to the heart of the matter of this great portion of Scripture and to take for granted all that I covered in last week's study—or at least most of what I covered there—we will make this overarching statement of Paul's teaching here. He is teaching on the subject of universal guilt and total depravity, proving that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin and therefore under the condemnation of God on account of their sin.

In dealing with this I said I would set forth Paul's great proposition and then his proof of that proposition and, finally, his conclusion drawn from that proposition.

Now the proposition that Paul is making here is simply this. Sin is serious, guilt is universal and depravity is total.

I got as far last week as showing his teaching that sin is serious. We need to start there again emphasizing the unique view of sin that the Bible teaches. Nobody else in the world treats sin as sin, at least as the Bible does.

In New Testament times Christianity stood out in stark contrast to every other religion by its doctrine of sin, how it defined sin, how it exposed sin, how it condemned sin, how it allowed no excuse for sin and yet how it held out the answer to sin. This is what set New Testament Christianity off from every other religion in the world be it Jewish or Gentile. And that is still the case today. Nobody but a Bible believing Christian defines sin and deals with sin as the Bible does.

This, then, is something that is serious. We are all under. I pointed out that the proposition carries with it the thought of motion and it is a very good idea for we were

¹ Romans 3:9-20.

not created under sin. We have fallen under sin. It is a tyrant, a monster that rules us so that it keeps men under its control, its curse and its condemnation.

Which leads to the second part of Paul's great proposition, that because sin is serious, guilt is universal.

In verse 10, "There is none righteous, no not one."²

In verse 19 we read, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."³

Remember this passage in Romans is not just made up of a verse or two. This is a passage that starts right back at Romans chapter one verse 18. It is giving the reason for Paul's statement that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because in that gospel is the power of God unto salvation. And in that gospel is revealed the righteousness of God whereby men might be justified unto life eternal through faith in Jesus Christ.

And he starts in 1:18, "Because..." This is why the gospel is so necessary. This is why the gospel is so glorious. This is what marks it as unique.

"[Because] the wrath of God is revealed from heaven."⁴

And he traces that wrath against the Gentiles and then he traces that wrath against the Jew. And now in this portion he gathers Jews and Gentiles together and he says, "All the world... guilty before God."⁵

So sin is serious and its guilt is universal.

As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes seven and verse 20, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."⁶

That is a guilt that attaches personally, individually to every one of us across the divides that men have used to set one man or one nation off from another, across the divides of time, across the divides of culture, across the divides of color, across the divides of education and of religion. There is this universal guilt that attaches to every man, every woman, every child in every place in every time in every condition. Guilt is universal.

Because, you see, sin was not an accident. Understand that. Sin was not an accident. When Paul describes us as having fallen under sin, that was not an accidental trip. That was a deliberate plunge as he will prove when we get into the fifth chapter of this book of Romans. Sin was not accidental.

² Romans 3:10.

³ Romans 3:19.

⁴ Romans 1:18.

⁵ Romans 3:19.

⁶ Ecclesiastes 7:20.

Nor, indeed, was sin inevitable or necessary. I think it is one of those things that is very rarely emphasized and it ought to be emphasized, that the condition in which God created our first parents is the very reverse to what we know today. Even a Christian finds holiness difficult because of the awful drag of the flesh.

But in Adam's case holiness was easy. The bias of his will was godward. He was created in righteousness. He was created in knowledge. He was created in true holiness. And there you have the entire moral constitution of man. His mind thought clearly. No man in the history of the world outside of the God man, the Lord Jesus Christ, no man in the history of the world has ever been able to think as Adam thought. Adam was able to think God's thoughts after him. Adam was able to think as God thought. Obviously, by analogy, he was a creature, but nonetheless, he was able to think divine thoughts. He was able to see the divine purpose. Adam couldn't look at himself. He couldn't look at an animal. He couldn't look at a tree. He couldn't look up into the sky. He couldn't consider anything without immediately and correctly relating that thing to his Creator. He was created with knowledge. He had an uprightness of character. He had a bent toward holiness and it was difficult for Adam to sin. God made it hard for Adam to fall.

So not only was it not accidental, it was not inevitable or necessary. Therefore the guilt of that sin is all the greater. We sinned in Adam and fell with Adam in his first transgression, as our catechism puts it, so that this guilt within us that we all feel, this guilt that haunts our consciences, disturbs our peace of mind, condemns our hearts and gives us fear at the thought of death and at meeting God in judgment, this guilt is not a psychological weakness. It is not some complex created by cultural conditioning or religious training. Sin and guilt are not just some breaches of the social norm. They are not excusable. Sin is rebellion against God and the consequent guilt is that within our own hearts that says, "You are subject to the righteous judgment of a holy God and justly so."

Sin is serious and guilt is universal. It is only a fool who tries to talk himself out of that gnawing sense of accountability to God and that awful, fearful realization, "I am justly under sin and therefore under wrath."

We have every reason to think that when you realize what Paul wrote in the details here, the details which will show us the third part of his great proposition, that depravity is total.

Sin affects the whole man, both his nature and his actions.

If you look at verses 10 and 11 you will see that they stand off in some clear distinction from verses 12 through 17. Ten and 11 tell us what we are. Verses 12 to 17 tell us what we do. Now they are clearly related as cause and effect. Sin adheres in both.

I don't want to take time to repeat what I have done in former studies, but one of the great weaknesses that has come into our pulpits has been a weakening of the biblical doctrine

of sin. You can't preach the gospel right unless you understand the biblical doctrine of sin. Men have tried to tell their congregations that sin is only a matter of our choices. I have even heard preachers go so far as to say that God never condemned anybody for Adam's sin. I don't know where they get that in the Bible. They certainly didn't get it in the book of Romans.

The idea seems to be that sin is only in isolated acts or thoughts. But when Paul here deals with total depravity he starts with what we are.

“There is none righteous.”⁷

When you read the next verse in the English version you would think that it is speaking of an act of understanding.

“There is none that understandeth.”⁸

The translation is good in English, but the force there is rather, “There is not an understanding one.”

It is now talking about that change of mind. I was describing Adam's mind before the fall a moment ago. Now there is a total reversal of that. There is not an understanding one. There is not a seeking one. This is telling us what we are. And the result of that is we are fallen in verse 10 and 11. Now we are filthy in verses 12 through 17. For now we come to what we do.

We have gone out of the way. We have become unprofitable. We don't do good. Our throat is an open sepulcher. Our tongues use deceit. The poison of asps is under our lips and our mouths full of cursing with our feet running to shed blood in the ways of destruction and misery. And the result of it all in verse 18 is utter godlessness where we are fearless toward God.

Now here you have the three elements in depravity: the fallen nature, the filthy acts and then this fearless attitude to God.

Have a look at those three things. I am not going to take time to preach on them. That is a sermon all in itself. But you look at those three things and you can look across America and those three things—the fallen nature, the filthy acts, the fearless flying in the face of God—they are the three things that most outstandingly stamp American life today and not only American life. This is total depravity. This sin, of course, is a mighty destructive force.

Let me quickly run these verses to show you what it destroys. In verse 10 it destroys our nature. We said Adam was created righteous. It destroys that nature.

⁷ Romans 3:10.

⁸ Romans 3:11.

Verse 11, it destroys both mind and will.

Verse 12, it destroys our fellowship with God.

“They are all gone out of the way.”⁹

Now follow that very carefully. They have gone deliberately out of the way. This is not an accidental erring. This is not describing people who accidentally get lost. When it says they went out of the way, “They are gone out of the way,” it means they have deliberately avoided the way.

If you want to get the force of the Greek term used here, you should read 1 Peter chapter three verse 11 where the instruction to the child of God is, “Let him eschew evil.”¹⁰ Let him avoid evil. Let him hate evil. Let him in his hatred of evil turn aside from that evil. That is the force of the word “eschew.” And that is the very word that here is employed.

And they have gone out of the way. They have eschewed that way, deliberately avoided it because they hated it. Sin destroys our fellowship with God.

The end of verse 12, it destroys our true purpose in life for you will see where it says—or should I say in the middle of that verse—“They are together become unprofitable.”¹¹ Worthless. Worthless.

You know, man was created as the very crown of God’s creation. We have been led astray by foolish exegesis to think that angels were created as the crown of God’s creation. No, sir, they weren’t. Read your Bible. God created angels to be ministering spirits to minister to us. They are servants. And without getting into the details of the argument again, I believe—this is not original to me. Reggie Kimbro first introduced me to this idea from the great Baptist preacher in London John Wilma. Satan’s sin was not that he aspired to take the place of God as we have so often been told. Satan’s sin was that he aspired to take the place of man. This is the crown of God’s creation.

What a worth there is in human life. What a profit there is in human life so long as that life is lived in fellowship with its maker. But sin destroys that. And we become worthless.

That is an awful word to use of immortal souls. This is something that always boggles my mind. I have confessed before I love great biography. I wish I could write a great biography. I admire the skill. I spend a long time reading it, more than just to learn about the person, but just to admire the skill of the biographer. I love great biography.

Sometimes the biographer’s skill is so great I can hardly finish the book. I was reading a

⁹ Romans 3:12.

¹⁰ 1 Peter 3:11.

¹¹ Romans 3:12.

biography of Napoleon Bonaparte. I got so mad at the absolute selfish, stupid, blind craziness of the character I said, "Enough of that. I have no more time to waste." I suppose I should have finished it, but I look at other that I admire, men who stand towering over human history.

I read of Churchill and I tremble that I think of him standing before God.

I have read of Lincoln—and just to keep the Southerners happy, of Jefferson Davis as well—and I tremble to think of him standing before God. I am not the judge of these men, when all the arguments of the world have ceased and the judgments of men have come and gone, the abiding judgment of God: Worthless. Worthless.

Now, don't misunderstand me. God can use evil men in furthering the cause of his purpose and he does. And he will do his will through the politicians and the military men and all the rest of it. But when they come to stand before God: Worthless. It is the final judgment.

I want you to stop and think tonight. For you are going to stand before God and so am I. God is going to have you before him and in your mind and heart will be every blessing and every advantage that grace has given you. If you are not a born again, justified believer in Jesus Christ ultimately you will find how true this is. Sin has destroyed your very purpose for being.

The end of verse 12, it destroys our works. There is no godly action.

Verses 13 and 14, it destroys and corrupts our speech and communication. Now there is a base subject I daren't get into tonight. Speech and communication, the gift of speech, that gift that God has given to communicate not only in a primeval way, but deep thoughts of philosophy, of theology, of motivation and of purpose, of love and of hate and most of all of God and his Christ. Speech and communication given to us primarily that we may commune with our God and, secondly, that we may commune of him with each other.

What has mankind done with that gift?

Did you ever listen to the normal half hour radio or worst still watch the normal half hour of what passes for soap box entertainment or soap whatever it is entertainment. Sin has destroyed it and corrupted it.

Verse 15 through 17, it has destroyed our peace and our tranquility.

And then, verse 18, has removed the sense of reverence and godly fear with which we were created.

This is the depravity that affects and afflicts every one of us and you will see it is total because it affects and afflicts every one of us in every part of our being.

Now let me emphasize this and explain something. Total depravity does not mean that every one of us is as rotten and as bad as we can be because in the grace of God he restrains very often the full expression of our sin.

2 Thessalonians chapter two speaks of him who now letteth or hindereth that empty Christian spirit. But let me point something out to you. Verses 10 to 12 of Romans chapter three quote from Psalm 14 verses one to three or Psalm 53:1-3, if you want it. They are identical.

Now Psalm 14 addresses the fool and the Atheist.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”¹²

And then there follows the description of this atheistic fool.

But in Romans chapter three Paul takes the very description that was pinpointed to the atheistic fool and he applies it not just to the Atheist and the fool, but to every single one of us, Jew and Gentile. And the truth is far reaching, that all the wickedness that is painted in the obvious sinner is latent in every other sinner.

Now never let us forget it. It is very easy for us to point at that big sin or in that big sin or in the other big sinner. And then we stand back like the Pharisee, “Thank you, Lord, that I am not as other men. Thank you, Lord, I am not a serial murderer or a rapist or a thief or whatsoever. Thank you, Lord, that I am better than they,” when all the time we ought rather to be saying, “Thank you, Lord, for grace that has put a cap and a restraint on the natural wickedness of this heart of mine that would be just as vile and just as filthy and just as rebellious as the most wicked man or woman that ever lived.”

There is not a fiber of your being any better than the being of the men of Sodom. There is not a thing in you or in me that would mark us as morally superior by our own nature in any way to the men who crucified our Savior.

The very things that we find in them, you look well enough. You will find them latent in your own heart.

So here, then, is Paul’s great proposition. Sin is serious. Guilt is universal and depravity is total.

Now for proof he says, “It is written...”

In verse nine he says, “We have before proved...”¹³

Actually the word would probably be better rendered, “We have before charged...”

¹² Psalm 14:1.

¹³ Romans 3:9.

Now he says, having given the charge in the previous section of Romans, chapter one, “I have charged the Gentiles...” Chapter two, “I have charged the Jew...” Chapter here, again, the first eight verses, “I have charged the Jews...” “Now, having charged both Jews and Gentiles, I am going to bring forth the fruit or the proof of the charges that I have laid.”

To all men he says, “I have arraigned you before the throne of the judgment of God. I have outlined the charges. Now I come to the proving of them. Here is the evidence. Here is the evidence.”

Now follow me carefully. When Paul goes to prove to men that they are sinners, what does he do? Does he go with them and follow them into the hell holes of this world and the cesspools of this world’s iniquity and find them there? He could do that. Would that prove that we are sinners? It may, it may not.

Believe it or not, I have talked to drunkards who tell me how good they are. I have talked to adulterers who see no immorality in the way they are living. So to find people in the cesspool of sin does not necessarily prove to them that they are sinners. But he comes to the Word of God and he says this. “Listen, the Bible testifies against you.”

His proof was Scripture.

Now here opens up something that I will only mention, but I want you to take it on board. Paul interpreted human action and human nature. He interpreted it—if I could use one word—human experience by Scripture. He did not interpret Scripture by human experience. And there is a world of difference.

What is cutting the heart out of so much of Protestantism and professed Bible Christianity today is this tendency to reinterpret Scripture in the light of human experience. Men and women, the necessity is to get back to the Bible and judge experience by Scripture.

Paul’s great concern is what does God say about your sin. You can go to the heathen priest and they not only excuse the sins that Paul is condemning, they welcome them. They were part of their religion.

You could go to the Jews and they would tell you and they could turn you up the learned Jewish fathers who would be in support. You have only got to be a circumcised child of Abraham and no such one can ever be kept out of heaven.

Paul’s whole argument was here: What does God say about your sin? We are not interested in human philosophy. We are not interested in human religion. We are not interested in your opinion or my opinion. Have you noticed? Especially in religious discussion in our day, the frequency with which preacher will say and just about everybody says, “Well, I feel and I think and the way I look at it is this.”

Listen. With all due respect, I don't care two cents how it appears to you. And you shouldn't care two cents how it appears to me. What you feel and what I feel is all beside the point unless what we feel is directly supported by what the Bible says. That is the all important thing. What does God say about my sin? What does God say about my soul? What does God say about my standing with him in the light of eternity? What does God have to say?

Well, let's take the evidences that Paul has been producing.

"It is written, it is written, it is written."

Let's look at those evidences. Let's apply them to our own heart.

Men and women, we would do well to do that, examine ourselves in this list of Romans three because listen to me. This is Paul by the Holy Spirit opening up the books of God. For there is another day coming very, very soon when these same books will be opened. Only this time they will not be opened to lead us to the great doctrine of justification as Paul is doing here, but they will be opened to lead us to the eternal condemnation of an everlasting hell as men and women without Christ are cast out into the darkness forever.

On that day John the apostle saw that day and he said, "On that day the books were opened."

You would be better to open the books tonight. It would be better to find out what does the book of God say about my sin tonight.

Listen.

"There is none righteous."¹⁴

You are still a fallen creature. This is what the Bible is saying. Don't fool yourself. If you are still in Adam, if you have never been converted to Christ, born of the Spirit and washed in the blood, listen. You are still unrighteous. You may join the church. You will simply be a religious unrighteous person. You may give all your goods to feed the poor. It will profit you nothing. You can't buy salvation. You can't work your way to heaven. You can't make yourself righteous. Righteousness has been lost in Adam and it can only be regained in Christ.

Go down the list. Do you not find the description of your own sin? Straying from God, deliberately going in your own way? The only good you do is the thing that you designate as good, not what God designates as good. Your speech has become corrupt. How much of your time is ever spent in holy communing with God, using that supreme gift of expression to get in touch with your maker through Jesus Christ?

¹⁴ Romans 3:10.

Oh, the evidence is there. What does the Bible say about your sin? Learn it before it is too late because this very book will be opened again on a day when there will be no opportunity to repent and be converted.

Here is Paul's proof. God says, "Every single man, woman and child among us by nature is fallen, by action is filthy and needs to be saved."

From that his great conclusion in verse 19 and verse 20.

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law."¹⁵

Let me explain that. The Jews were trying to evade and avoid all this saying, "Well, Paul, that is said of the Gentiles."

No, no. Paul says, "This is in law." And obviously the law was written to the Jews. So God intended this to include the Jews. And he says he wrote this, "That every mouth," Jewish and Gentile, "might be stopped."¹⁶

Think of that for a minute. Paul has reached this conclusion. It is time to stop the argument. There is no argument about it. God has given his verdict: guilty, a sinner, condemned. And he does it to shut up every sinful mouth.

But what of view we have of ourselves. You see, even before God sinners are ready to spout out their own defense.

"Lord convict anybody body else of being a sinner, but not me."

He says, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."¹⁷

Watch it carefully.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."¹⁸

In a word what Paul is saying: This law judges you. It convicts you. But it can never save you.

Understand this. The law says you are a sinner. The law says your sin is condemned and you are condemned because of it. But that is as far as it can go. The law does not say,

¹⁵ Romans 3:19.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Romans 3:20.

“Now if you do your best to live in compliance with the 10 Commandments, God will accept you.” The law doesn’t say that, for that would be a lie.

This is Paul’s great conclusion. I have taken the law of God and I have drawn it as far as it can go. How far can the law go? It can go this far, to make you know you are a sinner. And there it stops.

Do you see how Paul has come now full circle?

As he says in Galatians three, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin.”¹⁹ But what is the purpose of that? “[In order] that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”²⁰

It is as if he cried out, “Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, don’t you now see your need of Christ? Don’t you now grasp the force of Romans 1:16 through 18?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.²¹

Do you see the force of that? Your need is great, urgent, inescapable. There is only one answer. That is the great message of Romans. There is only one answer. And that is why Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.”²²

Even if it cost me my life, I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is God’s answer to the curse of sin.

This is what he will now start expounding in Romans 3:21.

The law brings you right up to the point of all the world guilty, “But now, but now...”

We have come into a new time. We have come into a new dimension of divine revelation. We have come into a new understanding of grace. We have come into a new revelation. Christ in person has come. And, as we will see God willing in due time, he is the deliverer from universal guilt, from total depravity. He is the Savior of all that believe.

A great proposition. Sin is serious. Guilt is universal. Depravity is total.

¹⁹ Galatians 3:22.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Romans 1:16-18.

²² Romans 1:16.

The proof—this is not a theory, not a dogma, not the product of Church councils, not a guilt trip laid on you by a preacher—the proof, this is the sovereign Word of the God of heaven. The conclusion: guilty, condemned. And watch this carefully. By the effect of the law of God you have the knowledge of sin. In other words, your own heart—no matter what your mouth says—your own heart in its depths says God’s judgment is true. That is the conclusion.

But the purpose of it all is to lead you to Christ because he has come forth to deal with sin, to deal with guilt, to deal with depravity, to bring us from condemnation into acceptance with God, to undo the fall and lift us higher than Adam ever was, to be saved for all eternity, to be reinstated and brought to that place that God purposed in the initial creation of making now redeemed men the very pinnacle of his entire creation. What a day that will be. What a consummate destiny.

Jesus said, Revelation 3:21. Here is the destiny of his people. “My Father gaveth to me to sit with him on his throne. I will give it to you to sit with me on my throne.”

That is the end of God’s salvation.

And I trust tonight that you will learn the lessons well and if you are not saved, you will realize you need to be saved. I have labored in vain if you haven’t come to realize you need to be saved, as least as far as you are concerned. I have labored in vain if you haven’t come to realize I am a sinner and I need to be saved. For Jesus is mighty to save.

How do you get to Christ? He says, “Come unto me. Come unto me.”

That is so simple it is beyond exposition. It is so simple. You don’t need to tell a child what it means.

Did you ever see a little kid lost in the mall, wandering, distressed, in tears and brokenhearted? Its world is coming to an end. It is lost. And then its mother or its father appears and they simply say, “Come.” That little child couldn’t find the word in the dictionary. It couldn’t define the term or its part of speech. But it has no difficulty in knowing what it means.

Jesus says, “Come unto me. Come and I will not cast you out.”

And if you are saved tonight, it is good to remember as the Scripture commands us to remember the pit from which we have been digged.

He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay. I was right down there as deep as a sinner could be. I never cease to remind myself in prayer before God there is not one sinner in hell tonight who more deserves to be there than I do.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved me, quickened me together with Christ and saved me by his grace.

Let's go home rejoicing we are sinners, but sinners saved by sovereign grace.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's all pray.

In a moment we are going to close by singing a hymn. I don't often do that, but it is a hymn I would like us to sing tonight. We are going to do that in just a moment. First let's take a moment to pray. And let me invite you to lift your own heart to the Lord. And if you are not a Christian, let me invite you tonight where you sit to lift your soul in confession of sin. Lord, I am a sinner, condemned and unclean. Calling upon Christ. Lord, be merciful to me a sinner and trusting Jesus to save your soul from hell.

From where you sit you can call on him.

And if I can help you or Dr. Barrett can help you after the service, we would be happy to remain and talk with you to lead you on to the Savior.

Father in heaven, bless thy Word tonight we pray and give fruit for its proclamation to the saving of the lost, to the finding of that one last sheep that has gone far astray, to the retrieving of that life that has been rendered worthless. Lord, bless thy Word tonight. We pray that thou would bless thy people. Let us see what grace has done. Oh, Lord, to be able to live in Christ, to be able to lift a voice of praise and worship to thee day by day, to be able to tell a little one of the Savior or a workmate of the power of grace takes these lives of ours and renders them profitable, not that we are anything, but that God gives us a purpose to live that is worthy of him.

Lord, let us go with that joy tonight. Give us fruit therefore in all our lives for the preaching of thy gracious Word we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.