

## Romans 3:1-20

“Guilty Before God”

It’s official, by the end of this study we’re in over our heads, swimming around (or perhaps more accurately I should say sinking down) in the sludge otherwise known as the sin of mankind. For the last few weeks we’ve been sitting here with a textual sense of *shame* as the Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle has confronted us radically with the reality of our *sin* in the *sight* of God and has categorically condemned all of humanity *before* God.

He’s dealt decisively with the obviously immoral, the openly unrighteous, those filled with wickedness, haters of God, and the lifestyle that accompanies/accommodates such individuals, their judgment is just. From there he moved on to the otherwise upstanding and moral, those who misinterpret God’s goodness *towards* them and patience *with* them as God’s acceptance or approval *of* them. Not realizing that God’s goodness is intended to drive them to their knees in repentance, knowing the depravity of their own hearts, how they minimize their own sin, failures and faults, but maximize those same sins in others. It’s not just about what’s happening outwardly, but inwardly, God judges the secrets of men’s hearts, again God’s judgment being just. Last week we considered the religious, those who say, “Wait a minute, I have a bible, I go to church, I’ve been baptized, surely I’m ok with God.” and What we discovered is that those things that so many think will *commend* them before God will actually *condemn* them before God because they’re looking to superficial securities, trusting in what they do as opposed to who Christ *is* and what He’s done. Specifically he was dealing with the Jew, so that Jew or Gentile, that’s irrelevant, sinner in need of a Saviour, that’s what’s relevant. and What the Holy Spirit has been teaching us is that it doesn’t matter where you come from, what your national identity is, what the circumstances are that surround your life. Every individual on the face of the planet who has ever lived and ever will live, regardless of social status, political platform, religious efforts or anything else have sinned and fall short of the *glory of God* (outside of the sinless *Son* of God, but that topic waits for our next gathering). and What we have before us in our text today is basically a, “So in conclusion, all are *guilty before* God.”

But before we get there Paul has one more group, or maybe just an extension in thought towards the same group, the religious, but here he extends his reasoning to the religious skeptic, those who look for loopholes in the system. Now that’s an *application* that we draw out of the text for ourselves, the specific interpretation we realize is still dealing with the Jew, understand that when you study the scriptures that there’s only 1 interpretation. But there are manifold applications of the Word of God to our lives, so in its *interpretation* understand that Paul is still dealing in these 1<sup>st</sup> 8 vs specifically with the Jews. But the questions that he confronts are those of the skeptic so that the *application* can be equally relevant to us.

Now as we closed our time last week you recall that Paul was undermining and unraveling the Jewish position on circumcision, the sign of the covenant. and He was establishing the fact that the circumcision that God was concerned with wasn't that of the foreskin outwardly, but rather the foreskin of the heart inwardly. The cutting away of the life after the flesh, being as it were dedicated and consecrated to God from the heart, and in that it didn't matter if you were Jew or Gentile, if you're consecrated to God from the heart, He sees you the same regardless of *who* you are or *what* your ethnic background and heritage may be. Now anticipating some questions regarding that, Paul addresses those here. (Notice)

Vs1

You see what's being said here is a logical response from their perspective to the position that Paul has been portraying. If being a Jew is irrelevant, and the sign of the covenant counts for nothing, than what was the point of it? What's the advantage of being the Jew, that's the profit (or more literally the surplus) of circumcision, in other words, how does this count for anything more than anything else. But the problem with that reasoning is that though it's logical, it's taking Paul's reasoning down a path he never intended. He was never seeking to say that who they were as a people and that what God had established through them as a people wasn't important, (nor to their advantage). He was simply saying what God had *always* said and that's that these things weren't what made for their salvation, or righteous standing before God. God never communicated, general amnesty or immunity from judgment, or a guarantee of salvation based upon the fact that they were Jews, or because they were circumcised. But that didn't mean that it wasn't to their advantage to be Jews, or apart of God's chosen nation, well then what *were* the benefits, how *did* they benefit?

Vs2

There were multiple and manifold benefits that came to them as a result of being apart of the nation of Israel. and Paul will begin to look at those things more in depth in ch's 9-11, but the primary thing that he points out here is that God entrusted to *their* nation, *His* word. There's no other nation on the face of the earth, in the history of mankind that God both *spoke* and *revealed* Himself to like the nation of Israel. What a blessing, what a benefit, that the God of all creation would speak to your nation *exclusively*, entrust His written Word to you solely/entirely. Every aspect of who He is, what it is that He wants mankind to know about His standards, His nature, His love for mankind, His desire to reconcile mankind to Himself, has been given *to*, and is to be communicated *through* you, your nation.

Now that message was to Israel as well, 1<sup>st</sup> of all, it was to the Jew 1<sup>st</sup>, so it didn't *grant* them salvation, salvation wasn't theirs by birthright, nobody is born with salvation as a birthright, we're all born with condemnation as a birthright. but the message *of* God's salvation was *given* to them 1<sup>st</sup>. That's a tremendous advantage, outside of that later on Paul will speak of the glory given to Israel, the various promises that God has given to them as a nation specifically and exclusively that He gave to no other nation. They were privileged with the priesthood, the Shekinah glory of God took up residence among them, the promise that the Saviour of the world would be brought into this world through them.

So though automatic entrance into Heaven wasn't one of them, there were blessings, benefits, and privileges galore that were to be found in being a Jew, and there are still *more* promises that God is to fulfill on the behalf of the nation of Israel. There's blessing and benefits still to come, right now we're in the age of the Gentiles, but once the fullness of this dispensation is reached God will turn His attention *towards* and pour out His Spirit *upon* Israel once again.

But this argument would be similar to saying, "What's the point in having a bible, going to church, or being baptized if those things don't save me?" Well, apart from Christ there may not be one, except to say that if you're coming to a place like this, hearing the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ consistently and persistently, you're at a much greater advantage in that you have the opportunity presented to you all the time to come into a soul saving life changing relationship with Jesus, as to where if you were hanging out in a bar somewhere that chance is less likely to find you there, not impossible, but less likely. But to the negative side, to be here and not respond, to come to church hear the word and turn a deaf ear, far from bringing you salvation, adds to your condemnation. Because you *were* at an advantage, you did hear the message, but you chose to reject it. You see with that greater privilege given *by* God, comes a greater accountability *before* God.

That's really what Paul is saying here, those things that they thought made for their salvation, really only created greater condemnation because they didn't respond rightly to the message themselves. But that didn't in anyway nullify the other privileges or advantages that God had give to them, He was still faithful on His end towards them, notice.

Vs3-4

The idea behind vs 3 being that, "Hey, you may've been *faithless* on your end with respect to God's Word, but God will remain *faithful* on His end with respect to His Word." Remember the faithful saying that Paul reminded Timothy of? "*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*" 2 Tim 2:13 God's Word will always remain true, heaven and earth will pass away but God's Word will by no means ever pass away. We read in Isaiah, "*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." Isa 55:10-11 God will be faithful to His Word.*

Now ultimately what this is pointing to is the fact that as Paul told the Colossians, "*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*" Col 2:16-17 In other words the point of the law, the festivals, the Sabbath days and all the rest were to speak *of* and ultimately point and lead people *to* Christ. Now the Jews as a whole, and still to this day as a whole don't receive Jesus as the Messiah.

There are those who *have* received Jesus as the Messiah, but as a general rule the Jews missed it, they didn't believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be, but just because they didn't believe it, did that nullify what God was doing it through it? No, God still sent them the Messiah just as He said He would, He suffered and died for the sin of the world just like God's Word said He would, He rose again on the third day just like God said He would, the fact that they don't believe it doesn't nullify the fact that He's been true to His word in it.

Or to understand it another way, if man says He didn't, but God said He did, who's being true? God. Who's being a liar? Man. The bible says, "*God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*" Num 23:19 Those are rhetorical questions, if He says it He'll do it, if He speaks it, He'll make it good. God is not a man that He should lie, what's the implication there? That men are liars, God's not like man, He doesn't lie. But the Psalmist said of men, "*All men are liars.*" Ps 116:11 So for the Christian the Word of God is our authority, we trust it emphatically, we stand on it insistently, I don't care what the pop culture portrays as accurate, I don't care what the opinion of majority consent is, if what they're saying stands at all at odds with the word of God, they're all liars, and God's Word is true. We'll stand alone in awkward isolation on the word of God before we embrace the comfort of popular opinion with out it. Because God is true, but men are liars, as it is written (read last ½ of vs 4).

Now this is quote from Ps 51:4 from that period in David's life when he sinned with Bathsheba, and both there in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint it says that God will be blameless when He judges, though here we read when He's judged. But for the sake of the point Paul is making it doesn't matter either way, because he's telling us that God's judgment will be vindicated by His truth and righteousness in the face of our lies and unrighteousness. So that the opinions people form of God, and the judgments people make of God are irrelevant to the fact that He'll judge the world in righteousness, and all their lies, deceit and sin will do is ultimately serve to vindicate His righteous judgment.

Vs5-6

If my unbelief can shine greater light on God's faithfulness, if my sin brings greater glory to God's righteousness, than why would God punish me for that which brings Him greater glory?

You see this guy is looking for a legal loophole, trying to justify his position. and When Paul says here, "I speak as a man" he's not saying that this is uninspired or that he's not speaking as an apostle, what he's saying is that he's presenting the perspective from the finite fallen human point of view.

In vs 6 when he says, “Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?” What he’s saying is that far from God *ordaining* sin to bring glory to Him, it’s *because* of sin that God *is* judging the world, God’s not going to condone sin in order to bring glory to Himself. “Perish the thought,” “God forbid” he’s saying that it’s a blasphemous thought to even think that the very thing that put Jesus Christ upon the cross, God is going to condone so that He can be magnified, or glorified all the more. Now having said that, will our sin serve to gain God greater glory? Yes because it will exalt His righteousness. But it’s not God’s *desire* that you sin, nor is it His hand that’s causing you to sin, that’s your deal, that’s my choice, just because God can take our wickedness and use it to exalt His righteousness, that doesn’t mean that God condones our wickedness. God judges unrighteousness, it’s simply a byproduct to His glory that our unrighteousness causes His righteousness to shine even brighter.

Vs7

“If my lie indirectly brings God’s glory, than why should I be one judged as a sinner instead of one praised for increasing God’s glory, and magnifying His truth?” You see this whole thought pattern is askew, it’s like saying why would Judas be judged as a sinner since his decision to betray the sinless Son of God served as the practical catalyst that really ramped up *to* and culminated *in* the redemption of world through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross? He should be praised for his work right? But what Paul is seeking to communicate here is that even though God can use the wickedness of man to accomplish His righteous agenda, He never ordained the wickedness of man. He never forced Judas to sin, or to make those decisions, he’s accountable for his own wickedness, how God is able to use it isn’t the point, its confusing peripheral issues with the primary matter. God’s glory in this context is a peripheral matter, man’s sinfulness is the primary issue. Judas sinned and committed a horrible crime and that’s the bottom line, the Son of Man had to be betrayed, but as for the man who betrayed Him, Jesus said that it’d have been better had he never been born. So man will be held individually accountable for the sin of their lives, the way God can use our sinful situations is to His glory, not our benefit.

Vs8

The point here is what? That the end never justifies the means, “Well if my sin shows the righteousness of God, than why not really get busy sinning that God might appear all the more righteous and just?” and People can twist the gospel of grace this way, and all Paul says about that mentality is that their condemnation is just. He doesn’t even comment on those who’ve slandered him. But this is perhaps the apex of man’s depravity, worse than the obviously immoral, or the self-confident moral individual, or the religious hypocrite is this person who takes the glorious free gift of God given to us in Jesus Christ and twists it in such a way as to turn into a license *for*, and a justification *of* sin, making a mockery of the grace of God. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid, how can he who’s died to sin live any longer in it? The point of God’s grace isn’t liberty *to* sin, it’s freedom *from* sin.

Vs9

Now when he says, “Are we better than they?” There’s a question as to who the “we” are that he’s in reference to. Is he saying “We Jews,” or “We Christians?” It doesn’t really matter the key in this vs is the conclusion, “...they are *all* under sin.” Guilty before God.

and That word “under” is an important one, it speaks of “under the power of,” or “enslaved to.” All of mankind are (left to their own) under the power of and enslaved to sin.

Vs10-18

The most damning evidence of all...now remember he’s categorically condemned all of mankind and presented evidence to support his allegations, it’s already a closed case, but now he’s driving the final nail in the coffin, how? By breaking open his bible and proving his position by scripture, “It is written.” “This is what I’ve been saying, and just so that you know I’m not making it up, notice what the bible says...” and He just lets go with this all out biblical bombardment of scriptural support as to the total depravity and all out sinful disposition of man. You won’t read this specific quote as is in the OT, this is a string of scriptures from the Psalms and one from Isaiah that he’s brought together as if to say, “This isn’t a one time sort of estranged idea found obscurely in the Word of God if you look hard enough, it’s says it here, and here, and here, and here, did I mention it says it here!” and He brings a 14 point indictment against all of mankind conclusively condemning all under sin.

Notice it’s an indictment from head to toe, evil impulse rules every aspect of the body, there’s no aspect of the human frame that’s escaped the inclinations of the fall. The inner man is completely corrupt, the mind, (none who understand) the heart, (none who seek after God) the will, (none who does good) all of it.

Vs 10 There is none righteous (and in order to underscore it) no, not one, not one single person is up to par with God’s perfect standard of righteousness. and Even if you could perfectly fulfill the law outwardly, the problem is that the law isn’t physical, it’s spiritual, it’s interest is inward in your heart, so when you think something out of line, or go somewhere in your mind and heart that you ought not, you’ve broken the law. But there’s no one who’s ever outwardly fulfilled the Law of God in totality much less inwardly, because our hearts are wicked and a deceitful.

“There is none who understands;” The mind of man is corrupt, our rationale isn’t godly, our ways aren’t His ways, as far as the Heaven are above the earth so far are His ways above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts. Even if we could somehow achieve His righteous standard, in and of ourselves we’d never understand or be able to comprehend the way to go about it.

It'd be like putting a blind fold on be spun around 40-50 times than being told we'll meet ya for lunch at a particular place you'd never seen in a city you'd never been to, and by the way you can't take the blind fold off, you've got to find it completely blind, and disoriented. You'd be clueless, just fumbling in the dark and you'd never make your desired destination, that's the natural mind trying to reason through spiritual matters. Paul told the Corinthians, "... *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.*" 1 Cor 2:14

"There is none who seeks after God." "What about all these other religions? The Tibetan monk, the Islamic individual, all these people on religious pursuits aren't they seeking after God?" Not the God of the bible, if man initiates the search he's not seeking the 1 true living God. Remember men love darkness, won't come to the light because their deeds are evil. Jesus was real clear, "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit,*" John 15:16 Oh they may be seeking some sort of euphoric state, or pursuing a path towards becoming their own God, or seeking some sort of self serving agenda in some way, but God's word makes it clear that God seeks after us, we love Him why? Because He 1<sup>st</sup> loved us and gave Himself *for* us.

Vs12

Notice these mutually exclusive terms, "*all* have turned aside", "*none* who does good." "They have together become unprofitable." That word "unprofitable" speaks of spoiled food, rotten fruit, there's nothing redemptive about it, and it's not going to get better on it's own, left to itself. If you have a rotten tomato on your cabinet, what's the value, you aren't going to eat it, and it's not going to cure out and get better the longer it sits there, it's altogether unprofitable, that's the picture of mankind apart from the intervention of a loving God in the person of Jesus Christ

This, "None who does good," we're not speaking about an ability to behave now and then when a situation calls for it, but rather that outward overflow of an inward desire for all that is holy and perfect, and good, that is godly. Remember the rich young ruler asking what good thing he needed to do in order to have age abiding life, Jesus there's only 1 good and that's God. That's what this is referencing, the goodness of God, there are none who do that, or are that on their own.

Vs13-14

The overflow of what's in our heart, spills out and evidences itself where? Our mouths, Jesus said, "*...those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man,*" Matt 15:18-20 James dedicates a portion of his epistle to the wicked nature of the tongue, lives are destroyed, reputations ruined, the name of God blasphemed, all by this one little member of our body called the tongue, it's constantly bearing witness against man concerning his fallen nature.

## Vs15-17

The way of war, man knows, the way of destruction and misery man knows, the way of vindictive behavior man knows, but the way of true peace man will never know apart from Jesus Christ. The day is coming when men will beat their swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks, and neither shall they learn war anymore. But that's the day when Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning upon the earth in perfect justice and equity, but until that time history and experience has shown that our best attempts are all at best failures when it comes to orchestrating any real peace. As we speak we have troops spread out all over this planet, the hope is peace, the reality is war.

All of these things can be summarized in this statement found in vs 18 (read). No fear of God, that's why we as humanity feel such liberty to sin, do what we want, when we want, however we want to do it, because there's no fear of God. I'm not rightly related to God, therefore I'm not rightly related to mankind around me. Well, about this time we're all feelin pretty good about ourselves.

## Vs19-20

What's the conclusion? We're guilty before God, and Paul points out to the Jew, those who prided themselves as those who were under the law that what the law says, it says to those who are under the law. Translation, this is speaking of you to! So that *every* mouth may be stopped and *all* the world stands guilty before God. Because the law was never meant to justify us, or make us righteous in God's sight, to the contrary it's by the law that I gain the knowledge of sin, the law was meant to perfect me, but rather to *prepare* me for a Savior, which is where we'll pick up next week.

## Prayer Points:

God thank You for reminding us these past few weeks of our total depravity and inability to do anything about it on our own. May that create in us a greater love for You Jesus than we've ever experienced before. May we just abide in Your grace, not fall into the trap of seeking to *justify* ourselves before You, or somehow make ourselves *right* with You, but just falling in *love* with You and abounding in grace. May we not use Your grace as a license for sin, but rather as liberty and freedom from sin.

If you're here and God has been speaking to you, wanting to set you free from the chains of sin and death, let me encourage you today, right now you're under the power of sin, but God wants to break that chain and give you the power of His Holy Spirit in your life. The overall emphasis of all this that we've gone over today is to simply help you to see your hopeless condition *apart* from Christ, that you might open your heart *to* Christ. Jesus has paid the price in full for your sin, forgiveness can be yours today, it cost God greatly that He might offer it freely to you, open your heart, and say "Yes" to Jesus.