

Romans 3:9-19 – Guilty as Charged – 29 May 2011

And this will be the basis of our thinking this morning, Romans 3 and let me read to you verses 9-19, Romans 3:9-19.

Bible says:

9 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;

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

19 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.

The title of the message this morning, is really taken very much from the last phrase here:

Guilty as Charged!

And that is the theme of verses 9-19 as Paul writes to us in Romans 3.

A story is told of a pastor who is about to die. He lies on his death bed and his dying wish is that he would die with two men by his side and so, he informed the church and the church was told that the pastor wanted a doctor and a lawyer in his church to come and be with him in the last moments of his life.

The members were rather puzzled. Why pastor, why did you choose this doctor and this lawyer? I mean, these two are not faithful members of the church. They have not been really serving the Lord and their lives have been dubious at best. They have been known to be covetous, they loved the world, so pastor we can't quite figure out why you chose these two men but since, this is your dying wish, we would accede to your request. And so, they informed these two men, a doctor and a lawyer and called them in and as the doctor and lawyer were called, they were rather surprised but happily so.

They thought to themselves, we are not exactly the most faithful members and we do not quite know why our pastor would call for us at a time such as this. But maybe, out of the whole church, we are already the best there is. We are the most fervent, er.. but we are the..., they can't think of a reason, but they thought maybe they are the best. And so they were, in a sense, very contented with themselves and they approach the pastor's house. They were led up to the room where the pastor was on his bed. And they were told to sit one on each side of the pastor.

The pastor raised his hands on his bed, stretching out and reaching for their hands and they likewise reach out their hands and he held their hands and he closed his eyes and there's a smile on his face and he was peaceful on his bed. He was in this position for a long time. The doctor and a lawyer are getting more and more puzzled, curious, why the pastor would call them. Minutes ticked by and an hour gone by and the doctor could not wait any more. So, he opened his mouth and says "Pastor, we were wondering, why is it that you would call the both of us to your room at the last moment, before you die.

The pastor finally opened his mouth and said "I read in the Bible, how Jesus died between two thieves, and I like to go likewise." (Laughter in the congregation).

You know, men tend to overestimate ourselves, isn't it true, we often flatter ourselves, we think of ourselves, better than who we really are? We as Chinese, we realized the proverb that goes, "Man tends to think that man is born in a righteous state, that we in the depths of our heart are kind and good and righteous." We also overestimate ourselves because the Bible informs us otherwise. The Bible reveals to

us that man is guilty as charged, that man is born in sin, he is absolutely sinful and that is what Paul is teaching us in the book of Romans up to this point of time.

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This morning, as we approach verses 9-19, we are going to see how man is guilty as charged. And this morning I'm going to do something unusual, in a sense, I'm going to give you the outline right from the start, so that you are able to follow along with me. In these verses, we are going to see, first of all, Paul giving us the conclusion of all that he has written so far.

1. The Conclusion

So, as he gives us the conclusion, and then, secondly, which is the main bulk of the message this morning, he's going to describe the condition of men in sin, he is going to be descriptive, he is going to paint a full picture of the condition of man, of sinful man and then, finally, he's going to reveal to us, the condemnation that we deserve. So, very simply, the conclusion, the condition and the condemnation, guilty as charged!

So let's head straight to the first point given in Paul's writing here, verse 9, the conclusion.

Now, it's rather unusual that as a preacher, I would start my first point, with the point, conclusion. But you see, we are not preaching in isolation here. It has been building upon the previous chapters that Paul has given. Paul, in the book of Romans, seeks to declare the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the good news of how a Holy God, is reconciling sinful man to Himself. That's the good news. But before any man can appreciate the good news, he's got to know the bad news and the bad news is that man is sinful and that's why, in chapter 1, Paul reveals to us that all Gentiles are guilty, they are in sin and Gentiles cannot plead ignorance because men do know God in their hearts.

And number 2, Paul in chapter 2, reveals to us that Jews likewise cannot plead ignorance, they cannot hide behind false security in their lineage, nor in the law nor in circumcision. Therefore, in verse 9 of chapter 3, this is what Paul says

9 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;

That is the conclusion, that the problem of man is sin. The reason why the Gospel is given is because man sits under the condemnation and wrath of God and we are guilty. That's why we need the Gospel. I was told, years ago, there was a manufacturer who produced something called, disposable guilt bags. Quite a neat thing and it's a pack of 10 brown paper bags and on for each paper bag were the instructions: If you are guilty, take a brown paper bag and place it near your mouth, breathe in as deeply as you can and blow out all your guilt. Then, tie it up and throw it into the waste paper basket. You know what, this disposable paper bag, disposable guilt bag was sold for \$2.50 per pack of 10 and 2500 of them were sold in no time. Strange isn't it that people would believe, disposable guilt bags?

I wish guilt and sin, could be gotten rid of so easily, but it doesn't. The great need of men today is their guilt of sin to be forgiven. Now, Paul had to write so much in chapters 1, 2 and 3, powerfully persuading men of their sins because men tend to deny their sins, they over flatter themselves. I picture men rebelling against God or remonstrating against God and say "God I am not sinful, I have no sin", almost like a little boy who said, "Mummy, I do not take the jam, mummy, I was not near the jam jar", he humanly protesting his ignorance on his innocence, at the same time not realizing that there is a good spoonful of jam on his shirt and under his chin.

We say to God, I am not sinful, God I had no sin, I am not as bad as you make me out to be, not realizing, sin is on our shirt and under our chin. And Paul, in chapters 1 and 2 is saying, see, I have proven to you that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners alike, we are all under sin and the key word here I think is the word "all", none excepted.

Now, this morning, I like us to play a little game. You don't have to stand up, you don't have to do something dramatic or drastic, just play this game along with me, if you may, alright?

Can you all raise up your right hands, not this, but like this, alright, follow me, alright follow me. Raise your right hand this way, and then raise your left hand, with a pointed finger and put it on the right hand of the person next to you. Put it on the person sitting next to your left, alright. So, everyone will be something like this, right hand, left-hand upon the right hand of the other person. Now, you all look so pretty. (Laughter in the congregation).

Okay, this is not the end of the game, this is the beginning. What I'm going to do now is read to you a passage of Scripture and when you hit the word that are all inclusive,

for example it's a word "all", "or none", "not one", or "together", these are words that are all inclusive isn't it? No when you hear the word, none, all, together, or not one, what you need to do is to quickly grab the finger of the person (Laughter in the congregation) that is placed upon your right palm. Grab it, you catch him you hear the word all or none. At the same time, you try to escape yourself. (Laughter in the congregation). So you try to grab the person and escape yourself, grab the person and escaped yourself. You got the rules of the game they are? Yes. All right, we would have a little demo. (Laughter in the congregation). I am going to read just one verse first and then, I'm going to start again, alright. So, warm up first, ah.

For, if the truth of God, More abounded, through my lie unto His glory, why yet and I also judged as a sinner.

Relax, not yet. (Laughter in the congregation)

Here it comes, what then, are we (Laughter in the congregation) hey..... nothing, I didn't say all or none, I was excited about.. (Laughter in the congregation) you must be alert. Are we better (Laughter in the congregation), getting heart attacks soon, how we better than they, no, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all (Laughter in the congregation), not yet, some more under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none (Laughter in the congregation) righteous, no, not one: (Laughter in the congregation), 11 There is none (Laughter in the congregation) that understandeth, there is none (Laughter in the congregation) that seeketh after God.

12 They are all (Laughter in the congregation) gone out of the way, they are together (Laughter in the congregation) become unprofitable; there is none (Laughter in the congregation) that doeth good, no, not one (Laughter in the congregation).

Alright, give yourself a round of applause.

Hey, thank you for being such a sporting and participative bunch. I hope you have fun, but the intent of the exercise is to show to you, that Paul is saying in verses 10-12, all of us have sinned, you caught each other isn't it, you caught each other when you used the word all and none and together, because that is the reality. Paul's conclusion is that all sit under sin. The word under is interesting. It is the Greek word that is hoop-o', that means to be in subjection to or in submission to, it means to be under the influence of and controlled of. So, Paul is describing man in their sins, man is under the influence and control of sin and none excepted.

So, here it is, the grand conclusion of chapters 1-3, is that all men are guilty, all men are in sin, all men face the impending fierce wrath of God.

2. The Condition (v10-18)

But, what is the portrait of a man in sin? And that's where we come to the second point, the condition of the man in sin. We have said, yes, man is sinful, but what is he like? Paul here, is going to be helpful, describing to us the condition of a man in sin.

Sin, is like a disease, it penetrates the core of a man, the heart of a man but it does not stay there because he seeks to pervade itself throughout mankind, throughout the entire life. And, so what Paul is going to do, is to give an anatomy of a man in sin. He first describes the heart of a man, the core of a man, the character of a man. Then, he's going to move on to the speech or to the conversation of a man, to his mouth, to his throat, to his lips and then finally, he's going to describe the conduct of the behavior of the man. So, if you follow along, this is the way he describes a man in sin. First, his core, then his conversation and finally his conduct. So, let's go straight to the core, to the character of man, what is man like on the inside?

Simply, verse 10

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

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Paul says, no man is righteous, all are unrighteous. He says, what is the meaning of the word righteous? The word righteous, is to be equitable. In other words, to meet or to conform to a particular standard. Of course, in this case we know, that being righteous in God's eyes, meaning that we are to conform to absolutely to God's standards or demands of righteousness. So, a righteous man meets God's standards. He is innocent, he is not found to be short of God's standards, he is holy, he is good, he is righteous. The Bible says, as God looks down from heaven upon all men, there is none righteous, no, not one.

You say, why at the phrase "no, no one", because, when the Bible says or when Paul says, that is none righteous, maybe some men would raise his hand and say except for me. But Paul says no, not a single one. All men are unrighteous. In fact, Jeremiah tells us "That the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." That is the core of man, he is spiritually dead, none righteous, no, not one.

You asked a question, then what is the standard of righteousness God looks for, how righteous is righteous, how good is good, does the Bible tell us the answer?

Absolutely. What does the Scriptures say about God's standard for us? He says "Be ye, well ye holy is given in 1 Peter, but what about the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the sermon of the mount." He says, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven is perfect." You know what is God's standard all the way? All along it has never changed, God's standard for those who would inherit the kingdom of God is perfection, absolutely sinless perfection. Why? Because God is absolutely sinless, God is absolutely perfect and those who dwell with Him in His kingdom have to be people of absolute perfection.

Now, the question comes, if God's standard is absolute perfection and absolute righteousness, then, who can reach the standard, how can God expect us to reach it? Let me tell you the answer, God doesn't expect us to reach it, because it is impossible for fallen man to reach it. And when we realize we cannot reach it, that's why Jesus is given because Jesus is the righteousness that man needs. Unto us, Jesus is sanctification, righteousness, wisdom, redemption, Paul says. And so, it is when we realize that we could never reach the absolute perfect standard of God that men would then flee to Christ. But this is true, there is none righteous, no, not a single one.

You see, men in sin realize we cannot reach that standard and so, what we do in our wicked hearts, to say that God's standards is not so high for us, it is somewhat lower, as long as I am not as wicked as him or her or them, I should be fine. But God says no, that is not that My standard. My standard of righteousness is here, perfection. That is why, he could say there is none righteous, no, not one. God's standard is not relative to other people, God's standard is absolute with regards to Himself.

Let me demonstrate or illustrate this. How many of you stay at Woodlands, can I see by a show of hands, how many Woodlands people? Two, three, four, five, six? Anyone else, Woodlands? How many of you stay at Woodlands Dr. 73? I am very precise here, Woodlands Dr., anyone Woodlands Dr. 73? Suddenly, the hands went away. Anyone says that Woodlands Block 686B? (Laughter in the congregation). You all laugh, why? Because it is obvious isn't it? Two weeks ago, this I think, made one of the headlines news.

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Female corpse found in Woodlands rooftop water tank. Remember the story, and the residents in Block 686B of Woodlands Dr. 73 were visibly upset because they had been drinking water from this tank that had the corpse in it for some time. They were not told about this early enough and they were worried about the health of their family. And when the authorities arrange for a meet the residents session, it was a furious time I was told, I was not there. But I was told, people were angry and sharp words were exchanged because they are asking, what's in the water. The authorities said, we have cleansed it, we have cleaned it, we have done everything we could to the water, it should be safe for consumption. They try to convince the people but it was not successful. Even the MP had to come and take the water and drink for themselves to see. But still, they were not convinced. They said, we have cleanse it, we have washed it, we have flushed it, we have changed the water. But you know something, residents of blocks 686 Woodlands Dr. 73 still would not drink, because they feared there might be some bacteria swimming still in the water. And they would not have it. To them, it is unclean, it could not be drunk. People refused to drink the water even though it is scientifically speaking, just a fear. They know what it means to be pure and when it comes to the standards of God, there is no such thing as allowing a little bit of contamination.

God's standard would not be lowered a single bit, you understand, because He is God, He is righteous, He is holy, He is pure and man has to realize, therefore, with regards to the standard, indeed, there is none righteous, no, not one. I could not stand before God and say "God, I am not as bad as him or her, I should be fine." God says "None righteous, no, not a single one."

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God is of absolute purity. His eyes could not behold sin. And so, this is the description first of all about the core of man that he is spiritually bad, it doesn't, he could never match up to God's standard. But what's worse, is that the Bible tells us that not only is man spiritually bad, he's also spiritually blind because he says, that is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. He does not understand God, he cannot understand God, he does not have the spiritual ability and faculty to comprehend God. There is none that understandeth. The word understand, needs to put together or to perceive or to comprehend and Paul is saying here that man, left to himself could never understand who God is, he couldn't.

1 Corinthians 2 tells us

1Cor 2:14

But the natural man (Added by Pastor: This is a man that has yet to come to Jesus Christ, he has no spiritual life, the natural man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because (Added by Pastor : These things, the spiritual things) they are spiritually discerned (Added by Pastor : Or understood)

So, a natural man, man left to himself, have no ability to comprehend spiritual things, because he does not have the Spirit of God in him. It's like trying to describe, the color orange to a man born blind. For all you could, use the most descriptive terms you can imagine, you could never explain to him the color orange. He doesn't have the faculties or the ability to see colors. A natural man could never understand the things of God because he has not the faculties to do so. In fact, the Bible tells us about all blindness in Ephesians 4, it says here

Eph 4:18

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

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Now, man does know something about God, isn't it true, Romans 1? The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, even His power and His divinity of His Godhead. So, men can know something about God, His power, His divinity. But man chooses to deny that. He holds down, suppresses that truth and therefore his heart becomes darkened. Lights turned out. He becomes blind and since then, men could not really understand God, he cannot grasp, cannot comprehend, cannot appreciate God for who He is. So, man is not only spiritually bad, he's also spiritually blind. As you talk to people today, they seem to be searching and looking and seeking God, but indeed the Bible tells us they can't, they could not unless God does work in them.

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I was reminded of a story, what story is this? A cute little story about the blind men and an elephant. You see, there are six blind men there, trying to figure out what an elephant is, they are blind, alright, they can't see. So, the blind men comes and say, I want to understand, I want to know what an elephant is and so they, six of them

came along and try to figure out the elephant by themselves. There's a poem that goes along with this story. Let me share this poem, I think it is well-written, humorous and at the same time very reflective of the situation of men trying his futile best to understand God, which he can't.

It was six men of Indostan (Added by Pastor : This refers to the South of Asia, India, Pakistan and so on)

It was six men of Indostan To learning much inclined, Who went to see the Elephant (Though all of them were blind), That each by observation Might satisfy his mind.

The First (Added by Pastor : You can see this guy (as pastor point to the picture))
The first approached the Elephant, And happening to fall against his broad and sturdy side, At once began to bawl: "God bless me!—but the Elephant Is very like a wall!"

(Added by Pastor : Because that's the place he touched on the elephant)

The Second, feeling of the tusk, Cried: "Ho!—what have we here, So very round and smooth and sharp? To me 't is mighty clear This wonder of an Elephant Is very like a spear!"

The Third approached the animal, And happened to take The squirming trunk within his hands, Thus boldly up and spake: "I see," quoteth he, "the Elephant Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out his eager hand, And felt about the knee. "What most this wondrous beast is like Is mighty plain," quoteth he; It is clear enough the Elephant Is very like a tree!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, Said: "E'en the blindest man Can tell what this resembles most; Deny the fact who can, This marvel of an Elephant Is very like a fan!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun About the beast to grope, Then, seizing on the swinging tail That fell within his scope, "I see," quoteth he, "the Elephant Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan disputed loud and long, Each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong, Though each was partly in the right, And all were in the wrong!

So, oft in theologic wars The disputants, I win, Rail on in utter ignorance Of what each other mean, And prate about an Elephant Not one of them has seen!

I hope you get the point. Oh, God is this, God is that, God is this, God is that, God is like this, God is like that. But we could not understand God. And that is the problem of man.

Man is spiritually bad and man is spiritually blind. Left to himself, he cannot understand God. There is none that understandeth Him.

You know what's worse than being blind? What's worse than being blind is the fact that you do not know that you are blind. That's what man is. We think we know God, we think we can seek God, we think we can find God. But we do not know we are blind.

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There is a Roman philosopher Seneca, and, in the letter he wrote to his friend, he said these things:

“My wife has an ignorant child, who has suddenly become blind. What I am about to tell you will be difficult to believe, but is true.”

“We cannot make her understand that she has become blind and no change in her environment will help her. She insists that her nurse take her to a house where it is not dark.”

“It seems to me,” continued the philosopher, “that what has happened to her is happening to all of us. Not one of us realises that we are really blind.”

You say, pastor, how could you say that no man understands God and no man seeks after God, I see so many religions around us. I see so many religious places of worship, I see so many devout, devotees of that particular religion, there are so many people who seek god, how could you say that none understand and none seeks god?

My friends, the reality of Scripture is this, Romans 1 reminds us isn't it, that people who worship a false religion or other forms of religion apart from what the Bible has

revealed are not people who are really seeking God. God says, they are not seeking Me, what has happened is that they have rejected Me, they denied Me, they hold down the truth in suppression, in unrighteousness and what has happened is that darkness has come into their lives and now they desecrate who I am by coming up and inventing so many kinds of gods and religions. All these religions are not a manifestation of man seeking God, but is a manifestation of men running away from God, because, there is none that understandeth God, there is none that seeketh after God, left to themselves.

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Then you say, who can seek God if there is none seeks God. You see, it is not about us seeking God, primarily. It's about God first seeking us. Jesus Himself said

John 6:37,44

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (Added by Pastor : And look at verse 44) No man can come to me (Added by Pastor: Why, because they none that understandeth God and they none that seeketh after God, so, no man can come to Me), except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

So, you see, this is the condition that Paul describes us all to be in, prior to coming to Jesus Christ. We are all spiritually bad, there is none righteous, no, not one and we are all spiritually blind, there is none that understand God, there is none that seeks after Him.

But what's worse, is that we are also spiritually bent. Look at the words here, they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

The phrase here, gone out of the way are several words in the English, but actually just one word in the Greek. It is the word that means Exclino

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It's a composite of two Greek words. The word "Ex" is the root word from which you get the English word here exit. It means to be out or away. The word "clino" is from the word we get inclined or lean. And so, Exclino refers to something or someone that is leaning away. Paul says, the corruption of sin in man is so bad that he is spiritually bad, he's spiritually blind and he is spiritually bent. He will not and he cannot understand nor seek God, and that is the tragic state man is in ever since sin has come into our lives. So, it is not a pretty picture but that is the core of man, that is the description of man.

Some of you here are medical students and I want to share a little illustration of medical students. Paul has at this time described the condition of the call of men. But as I have said, sin is like a disease, not only inflicting us on the inside, it will soon manifest itself on the outside. It will manifest itself in our speech and also in the way we live. Now, when I was a medical student, when we enter clinical years, we will see patients in the hospitals. Sometimes, we have given tests, we are given some kind of an examination where our doctor tutors will bring us to the bedside of a patient and say "Look and proceed." Wow, very classy words. Stand there, shake the hand of the patient and say "Look and proceed."

What he means is this, without asking any questions, proceed to look and to examine the patient and try to come out at the end of the examination, about the disease or the diagnosis of the patient. So, it is quite cool, I love those exercises. Very exciting, you come to a patient, he's lying there, looking at you and you're supposed to look and proceed and diagnose the condition.

Before I was a trained doctor, before I knew anything, I thought the best thing is to take the stethoscope and put it on the heart. Wah, tick, tock, tick, tock, you can hear what the problem is. But the doctors and the tutors often tell us, don't rush into it, look out for the signs on the outside first. Shake his hands, and look at his hands, look at his arms, look at his neck, look at his eyes, look at his lips, look at his whole demeanour, before you even ask him to open up his shirt and let you listen to the heart. And that's what we learned. Yesterday, I put up some pictures and show you some signs of patients. Can you see that there is something wrong? It is quite obvious isn't it, if you can't, you are worse than my son. (Laughter in the congregation) because when my son saw the picture, he says, Wah, why the finger so big? Well, this is what doctors will describe it as clubbing of fingers. He looks like a club, right, piak, piak! You can use the fingers like a club, it's club shaped and it is

swollen and the distal ends and something is wrong when you, you can look at your fingers now, I know some of you are looking, do I have club fingers? You can look at it, but it is a sign that something is not quite right in the body.

This is another picture, can you see something wrong, what's wrong with the lips? Swollen, not quite. When my son saw it, he was spot on. Daddy, why is the lips so black? And he's right, he spotted that there is a kind of a bluish tinge to the lips and this is what we call cyanosis. Cyan, color, cyanosis is the lips are turning blue and when we as medical students, before we even put our stethoscope to the wall of their chest, see that there is clubbing and there is cyanosis, what do we think of? My fellow classmates who are specialists today, you think of? Aiyah, this one only a few people can know, so you all must help. You think of, you think of heart conditions. You think something is going on in the heart and that's what we proceed to do, we examining the heart.

In fact, when a child has a heart problem, a baby has a heart problem that is severe enough, when he cries, he uses a lot of energy, requires a lot of oxygenation, his body is under stress, because his heart is not working well, he turns blue on his distal ends and his lips turn blue. My son, when he saw this picture, hey, why is the boy sick? He realizes that something is going wrong here. But you see, what I'm trying to illustrate is that when something goes wrong in the heart, it would be manifest on the outside. And when Paul says, there is none righteous, there is none that seeks up to God, they are all gone out of the way, he's saying that the heart is flawed, is blemished and it will surface itself next.

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What is the next phase you would expect the disease to affect? Paul is wise, he knows it is in the mouth, it is in the lips, it is in the throat, it is in the tongue. And so Paul says, this is what happens when a man is corrupt on the inside. This conversation is corrupt, his communication is filthy, 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.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Look at these words, the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth. Why, because this is the principle of Scriptures, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." So, when a man's heart is rotten, his speech will smell and will come forth

a stench. So Paul says, their throat is an open sepulcher. The throat is an open grave. He said, the throat is leading to the heart like what a grave is leading to the corpse. Do you see that? When you place a corpse into a grave, into a casket, the next thing you do is to close it. Otherwise, the stench, the filth, the decay would filter upwards and be so obvious. And Paul is saying, that when man does not shut his mouth and when he opens his mouth, his throat leads us to the stench, the decay, the rotting that is going on on the inside. And his communication, his conversation is filled with stench and filth. Their throat is an open grave, a yawning grave.

And then he goes on to say, their tongue, they have used deceit. Be careful, when you listen to people. I think, we all learned that in life isn't it? Life is not as innocent as we make it out to be, because men are sinful and with their tongues they used deceit. You will realize this in your business dealings, you will realize this with your friends, because men are sinful and that tongues are full of deceit. Don't be surprised, because that comes or springs forth from a corrupt heart.

And then he says, the poison of asps is under their lips. They use flattering words, but in the end, the fangs revealed itself and it stings you without you knowing it. That is poison under their lips and whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

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I was, in a sense quite saddened, when I read of all that is going on during the general elections this year, and about what netizens write. I think it is fair for us to conclude that there is a lot of anger and bitterness and even cursing. There is that uneasiness when I read through most of the comments and they are not favorable things, I am not supporting any party alright. But, I am saying the general atmosphere of it, it's not nice, because, when man speaks or when man types or when man writes, it reveals what is on the inside and you shouldn't be surprised really, but I was. I was surprised to read of such great bitterness and cursing that emanates from our lives.

So Paul says, because the heart is corrupt, the communication becomes corrupt and eventually, the conduct also becomes corrupt. Their feet are swift to shed blood, there is a lot of violence and murderous intent, destruction and misery are in their ways. In the way of peace they have not known.

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:17
And the way of peace have they not known:

I mean, in our recent times, you hear of tyrants that are murderous, we hear of such great violence and crimes. Where did they come from? It is not because of a lack of social etiquette, it is not because there had been no moral education. These things are mere plasters that try to smoothen over a deeper underlying problem that springs from the heart, inside out. Because the heart is corrupt, therefore the communication and the conduct will likewise be so.

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And so, this is not something moral education or social etiquette could improve. The society today, people today will not improve by just changing our outward behavior, because, Paul has successfully, I think in this passage, reveal to us the problem that is deeper on the inside. The real problem on the inside is that there is no fear of God in their eyes.

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Why is man so abandoned to sin? Simply because there is no fear of God before their eyes. So, they do as they wish. No fear of God. So my friends, this is the condition of sinful men. Paul concludes that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin, all are sinners. He then proceeds to describe the condition of sinful men, his call, his conversation and his conduct. It's not a pretty sight but it's what we are.

A Christian man is in a park and he was bringing a Bible along, hoping to read it while in the park. He bought his Bible, place it in his pocket and was going to a place he would find suitable. But as he walked in this beautiful park, there was a group of tourists who came along and said "Sir, can you help us take a picture, we want to capture the beautiful scenery and also be in that scenery." The man said "Sure, I would love to, but you know, I already had your picture." They said "What?". "Well, I have your picture, it's right here in my pocket." And he pulled out his Bible and then opening to Romans 3 and says this is your picture, "There is none righteous, no not one, there is none that understandeth God, there is none that seeketh after him, they are all gone out of the way, they all unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one. See, this is who you are."

You may say, "Wow, you are so harsh." But that's the harsh reality. Paul is not putting back any punches, he said, we are all a people in sin.

3. The Condemnation

And finally, as he closes, he gives us the condemnation. The conclusion is that man is sinful, the condition is that he is absolutely depraved and corrupt in everything that he is and that abides and remains a condemnation to man in such a state. He says in verse 19

19 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.

The world like to think that when we stand before God, we could say "God, I am not as guilty, I am not as sinful as them, God, why are you so unjust to punish me." Well, Paul says, the whole intent of writing up to this point is to reveal to you how sinful you are.

A man, just had a picture taken by a photographer and he took that picture back and he looked at it and says, "This picture is not nice, you are not doing any justice to the picture." The photographer took the picture back and says, "Sir, with a face like yours, you don't need justice, you need mercy." (Laughter in the congregation).

We say to God, God I am not as bad as we are, God, you must be just, you cannot punish me. But you know, what we need is not justice, because God is just. What we need is mercy, mercy because we are absolutely guilty and in sin. You say, what's the intent of it all? Well, so that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.

The intent of Paul, up to this time, is to show us, how needy, helpless and hopeless we are in and of ourselves, so that he may then lead us to Jesus Christ. You see, you cannot be saved until you're willing to be silent before God and acknowledge your sins before Him.

A king, visited a slave ship. This is where the slave would be, those who are paddling and rowing the ship at the bottom rung. The slaves are prisoners because these are criminals and yet chained to the oars, chained to the paddles and for the rest of their lives, they are condemned to just rowing the boat in a very hot and difficult environment. The king decided to pay a visit to one of the days to the slaves upon that ship. He interviewed them and ask them, why are you here? And the people, one by one said, "But, King, I am innocent, I don't deserve to be here. I am praying, they forced me to do it and one by one they denied their crimes." They said, we are not guilty, we are framed, we are innocent. Then, finally the king came to a last man and said "Why are you here?" And the man said "Sir, I am here because I deserved it,

I committed a crime, I have sinned against God, I have sinned against you, I have sinned against the people. I'm here to pay for my sins." The king, with a twinkle in his eyes, with a wry smile upon his face, took a step back and said "Gentlemen, why is this dishonest man in the midst of all these honest men here? Set this dishonest man free at once, he doesn't deserve to be with all these honest men." (Laughter in the congregation). Humorous take, but what it means is this. If we insist we are innocent, if we insist and we say to God, I do not need any forgiveness, we are fine. My friends, the Gospel will profit you nothing whatsoever, because the Scriptures, the law is written so far, is that we may be brought to Jesus Christ. You see, in Galatians 3, the Scriptures have concluded, all under sin. Why? So that, the promised by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Jesus did not just come to save just you from your sickness, or from your poor business deal, or from a failed career. Jesus came to save us from our sins, to save men and women who were willing to say, I am a sinner, condemned and helpless. Only then, would you have a chance to be set free from your sins, if you turn to Jesus Christ.

My friends, that is the intent of Paul up to this point. I know there are some here who have yet to come to Christ and let the Spirit of God take His Word and speak to you. Let's bow for a word of prayer shall we? Father, thank You again for Your Word. Thank You, in Your mercy, You warned us in the Scriptures, so that we may be without excuse, so that we may know that there is only One Way, One Truth and One Life, and that is Your Son, Jesus Christ. Bless the preaching of Your Word, to the hearts of Your people. May all men behold Jesus the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. We ask and pray all this now in Jesus' mighty Name, amen.