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In Romans 1 and 2, Paul clearly stated that neither the “heathen” that have not received the revelation of God’s word have any excuse not to believe in God, nor will the moralist or the self-righteous religious person gain salvation through good conduct or works. In the first part of Romans 3, he summarizes this section to say that indeed the entire world is guilty before a holy and righteous God.

God had proved to the Jews that they had utterly failed in what they sought to do outwardly. However, He assures them (and us all) that when the Holy Spirit does a work of the heart, it should become reflected in the way we live our lives.

In answering their inevitable questions, Paul points out to the Jews that the Jews had graciously been given certain advantages. They had been given the Word of God. God had spoken to the nation of Israel, and then through Jews the message was taken to the Gentiles. However, because Israel as a nation turned away from God, He then gave certain blessings to the Gentiles.

The next question raised (in verse 3) asks if since Israel has been unfaithful to God, will He then also be unfaithful in His promises to them? The answer is a resounding “no”! Unlike man, God is always faithful. 2 Timothy 2:13 reminds us that even “if we are faithless, God remains faithful”. He cannot and will not deny Himself. As Paul says in verse 4, “let God be found true though every man were a liar”.

A third question is then raised that basically says this, ‘if our unfaithfulness has prompted God to reach out to others, is it better for us to simply remain unfaithful’? The question implies that their unfaithfulness would actually a good thing in God’s economy! Such reasoning is like saying that a lying is good because it makes the truth stand out more, and thus should be excused. So they ask in verse 8, why not just keep doing evil so that good may come?

The fact that God is merciful and graceful is never an excuse to accommodate or justify evil. The reader will be reminded of that repeatedly in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Indeed some people may suggest that God’s loving character makes it possible for men to live however they please without serious consequences.

While God’s greatness and glory is seen in that He has provided a remedy for our sin, He is certainly is never glorified in our sinning. Later in the letter (Romans 12:9), Paul will remind us that we are to “hate what is evil, and cling to that which is good.”

God’s final verdict concerning the entire human race is summarized in Romans 3:9-20. The fact is that the whole world is guilty before Him.

We have seen that the heathen or Gentiles stand guilty before God. They have rejected God’s revelation to them and have instituted false gods in His place.

Then we saw that the moral person falls short of God’s perfect standards. Though he may boast of his morality and compare himself favorably with others, he too is guilty before God.

The religious people – the Jews (and Gentiles) – who have the Word of God are condemned as well. They have been given God’s word, but have failed to keep and obey it.

Beginning at verse 10, God provides a grim diagnosis of man’s spiritual condition. He says, “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.” Later in Romans 3:23, he again emphasizes the universality of man’s fallen condition in saying that, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.

Whether or not people can measure up to their own lowered standards is irrelevant. God’s standards are the ones that matter. It is from His standpoint that He boldly states that none are righteous.

The passage continues, “There is none who understands, there is none that seeks God.” In their natural condition, people are not only ignorant of spiritual realities, they are not naturally inclined to seek them. God initiated the relationship with us, not the other way around. The Bible clearly states that we who love Him only do so because He first loved us (1John 4:19).

The following verses continue to quote the OT (in the Psalms) regarding the truth of man’s natural spiritual condition. The verses say that all have turned away, are unprofitable, and none does good. Later in Romans 8:8, Paul writes that those who are in the flesh (not born again in the Spirit) cannot please God. But in the next lesson, we will turn to the good news from our merciful God!

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Note the expressions of man’s evil as seen in the tongue (what people say), the feet (what people do), and the eyes (how people view things) in v. 13-18. What can we learn from this passage and how might we avoid sin in these areas?

Romans 3:1-20

God's Judgment Defended

What advantage then has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

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

³So what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God?

⁴Certainly not! Indeed, let God be found true though every man were a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may prevail when You are judged." [Ps. 51:4]

⁵But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in human terms.)

⁶Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?

⁷Someone might argue, 'because of my lying then God's integrity is magnified to His glory, so why am I still condemned as a sinner?'

⁸And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come?' — as some people slanderously have charged us with saying. They deserve to be condemned.

All Have Sinned

⁹What then? Are we better than they? No, not at all. For we have already made the charge that everyone, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.

¹⁰As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; [Ps. 14:3]

¹¹There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks God. [Ps. 14:2]

¹²They have all turned away;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one."

¹³"Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit";
"The poison of asps is under their lips"; [Ps. 5:9; 140:3]

¹⁴"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." [Ps. 10:7]

¹⁵"Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶Destruction and misery mark their ways;

¹⁷And the way of peace they do not know." [Isa. 59:7-8]

¹⁸"There is no fear of God before their eyes." [Ps. 36:1]

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world be held accountable to God.

²⁰Therefore no one will be justified in His sight by observing the law, rather through the law we gain knowledge of sin.

Memory Verses for the Week

Romans 3:10 – *As it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one."*

Romans 3:23 – *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*