

Romans 3:9-20
“We’re Bad; Good!”

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I. Intro

You go in for a routine checkup and you think to yourself, “*I’m in good shape, upright and mobile, know a lot of folks who can’t say that. Don’t drink, smoke, I exercise and watch my weight.*” The Dr. listens to your heart, draws some blood, and checks your blood pressure and says come back in a week and we will go over these tests. And when you come in he says, “*Man you’ve got some real health issues that if left un-dealt with will take your life.*” “*What, are you talking about, Doc!*” You protest. “*I’m in great shape compared to lots of folks I know!*” “*Well,*” he says, “*The tests I ran aren’t in comparison to others they are diagnoses of your health when compared with ideal health. You’re dying if you don’t make some changes today!*” The first three chapters of Romans is that visit to your **Great Physician** where most go into His office and say, “*This is no big deal, and I’m a good person!*” But the *divine diagnosis* is that **you may not be as bad as you could be, but you are as bad off as you can be! And without a heart transplant you’re going to die!**

II. Vs. 9-18 Three reasons why no one is right

Vs. 9 Paul has scanned the horizon of humanity with only one question: “**Is there any way, any person, can be good enough to make it to heaven on their own apart from faith in Christ?**” His answer to that question is found in verses 10-18. Paul compiles a **14-fold divine verdict on the entire human race which is not based upon his opinion but upon what the scriptures say.** These quotations are from Psa. 14:1-3; 5:9, 140:3, 10:7 and 36:1 and from Isa. 59:7-8 and **all support the opening statement** that “**There is none righteous, no, not one.**” Paul looks at the

human condition as one would an X-ray or Cat Scan only this is of the lost sinner, from head to foot. As depressing as this X-ray is, **Paul wants us to understand our complete inability to save ourselves. The fall of humanity touched every part of our being, and the inventory of body parts in verses 13-18 that are corrupted (throat, tongues, lips, mouth, feet, and eyes) demonstrate this.** Paul divides these body parts into three reasons why no man can make it on his own:

1. Vs. 10, 11 **Character:** “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” “*There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God*”: This is **how God see’s man’s character apart from Jesus.** Mankind is totally depraved, throughout all humanity and time. God says, “**I can’t find one good person who on his or her own merits is right all the time!**” Even further astounding is the declaration that there isn’t even one person though out history who has sought to be right all the time. I think of all those folks who go to schools, take up causes that seem to be good and are searching to be right. But God says, “***Nope they sought to be right more than some but not one person has sought to be right all the time.***” *Ok, but there are those that at least try to seek God don’t they?* According to God who alone knows the thoughts and intents of each heart, NO! Amongst all the “*seekers*” in religion who dedicate themselves to various worship practices and rituals it certainly looks like from our perspective that they are seeking God but what they are seeking is “*a god*” on “***their terms and conditions***” not “**THE GOD**” on His terms and conditions all the time.
2. Vs. 12-17 **Conduct:** Having established man’s true character Paul moves on to speak of **mankind’s conduct in both speech and action apart from Christ.** And Paul couldn’t be any clearer than what he says in verse 12 “*There is none who does good,*

no, not one.” **Imagine a video camera constantly scanning your every move throughout your life nothing at any time escaping its watchful eye.** Now imagine me saying “Today, to prove that there is no one that does good all the time, I’ve selected ___!” I’m sure that next week we wouldn’t have a single person in Church. **Paul starts out with our speech our throats, tongues, and lips and says that they are a tomb of deceit, full of poison.** People love toilet talk, they love gossip, and they set out to deceive all the time. Caustic words, sarcasm and slander cutting up our fellow humans with no thought of how it harms others in fact we laugh at it as long as we aren’t at the end of the punch line. **According to a study by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts the average person curses once every 175 words and when angry the average goes up to two out of every three words.** Paul says that such action doesn’t stop with the mouth it moves to the feet as it is swift to shed blood causing misery and destruction everywhere it goes.

3. Vs. 18 **Cause**: Finally, Paul tells us **the root cause** for all of this, “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*” That is the sole reason why people talk and act the way they do.

It isn't as if there were some righteous and God couldn't see them.

- a. *There has never been a truly righteous man apart from Jesus Christ. "Even Adam was not righteous: he was innocent - not knowing good and evil but he was not righteous!"*
- b. *There is none who seeks after God: We deceive ourselves into thinking that man, on his own, really does seek after God. Mankind never initiates the search, he doesn't seek the true God, instead he seeks an idol that he makes like himself.*

- c. *They have together become unprofitable: The word unprofitable has the idea of rotten fruit. It speaks of something that was permanently bad and therefore useless.*
- d. *There is no fear of God before their eyes: This summarizes the entire thought. Wherever there is sin, there is no fear of God.*

III. Vs. 19-20 Three things the Law does for us

Vs. 19-20 Paul points out that this horrific description of man's utter sinfulness came to us in the law; and it is intended for those under the law and reason for this is to silence every critic and to demonstrate the universal guilt of mankind - that entire world may become guilty before God.

Many Jewish people of Paul's day took every passage of the Old Testament describing evil and applied it only to the Gentiles - not to themselves. The law cannot save us, it cannot declare us right by our mere possession. It's useful in giving us the knowledge of sin, but it cannot save us.

It is because of the above three truths with regard to all of humanity that even a “*Holy and Good Law*” is powerless to make a person right all it can do is reveal just how wrong they are and need of being made right! The law is there to point out what should be the obvious in all of us that we aren't “Basically Good”. In the final sentence in the book of Judges as Samuel compiled 350 years of history of Israel he summed up the reason for their sin saying, “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” Paul says that the Law does three things for us:

1. Vs. 19a It stops our mouths: When we see what God's standard is, we can no longer compare ourselves against someone else, it shuts our mouths of self-righteousness! All the excuses and self-justification will be stopped. In Matthew gospel in chapters 5-7 he recorded for us Jesus' words revered to as the “*Sermon on the Mount*” where Jesus makes it clear that

the keeping of the law was not just an external thing, **it was an internal as it dealt not just with what people do on the outside but what they think and their attitudes on the inside.**

2. Vs. 19b **It puts everybody in the same category, SINNER:** There isn't a single person that on their merit that will be good enough. Hebrews 9:27 puts it this way "*it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment*". There isn't any reincarnation to go back and do it again and again until you reach perfection. **The reason for this each time you would still have the same outcome, guilty of being a sinner.**
3. Vs. 20 **It reveals what sin is:** In Matthew 22:36-40 a religious leader asked "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*" Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" *This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*" All the Law does is ask us to Love, first towards God and secondly toward our fellow man. **The law points out that our chief sin is a failure to love God and each other all the time.**

By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified!

- **This means** *that the law, having been broken, can only condemn us - it can never save us*
- **This means** *that even if we could now begin to live perfectly keeping the law of God it could not make up for past disobedience, or remove present guilt*
- **This means** *that keeping the law is NOT God's way of salvation or of blessing under the New Covenant*

J.B. Phillip's paraphrase of the phrase "*For by the law is the knowledge of sin*" says that "**It is the straight-edge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are**". Before you can make something flat you have to have something that is perfectly flat.

Two things we must never forget:

1. I'm a great sinner!
2. Jesus Christ is a great Savior!

Justification isn't just pardoning our guilt, neither is it just forgiving our debit, both of those would make us only rehabilitated sinners. Justification expunges our record, wipes our crimes off the books and says that we have never had any infraction and God looks at you and me as if we have never sinned. Paul taught that people apart from a relationship with Jesus are bad, but he never believed them to be too bad to be saved! The truth is I've been purposefully "*mistreated by God*"! Because I'm a guilty sinner He should have cast me into hell and never looked back. Instead, He has "*mistreated me*" giving me what I don't deserve and can never earn all because of His Son dying on my behalf He has treated me as His son! Man has the power to sin, and Jesus alone has the power to free me from the penalty and power of my choice.