

Romans

~~September 27, 2009~~
October 4, 2009

Romans Three

Romans 3:9-20

This is the ninth lesson in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘**The just shall live by faith.**’ “ Romans 1:16-17

Title: “**The Wrath of God Upon the Whole World**”

Last Sunday we looked at the advantage of the Jew {3:1-8}. Even though they had the written law and the rite of circumcision, the Jew stands condemned because of their disobedience. “*What advantage then has the Jew?*” The written law and circumcision had no value unless accompanied with obedience, and yet the Jew had a great advantage because they were entrusted with the very Word of God.

“For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God with out effect?” Even though some [most] Jews did not believe, it did not nullify the promises of God to Abraham. There is widespread error today, as there was when Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome, as to who are the seed of Abraham; who are the “Israel of God,” to whom the promises were made.

And then in the third place, Paul declared that anyone who said that we should sin deliberately because everything, even our sin, ultimately redounds to the glory of God is justly condemned!

Today, we take up: **Romans 3:9-20**

The Wrath of God Upon the Whole World

The questions and answers in this passage is a summary of 1:18 - 3:8.

Romans

It is the conclusion that Jews and Gentiles, indeed **all people** are “under sin” and thus are condemned. No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing “deeds of the law.”

If you are reading the NIV and are paying attention to the footnotes, you may be confused. “Are we **better?**” or “Are we **worse?**”

The problem is that the Greek word {*proecho*} translated “better,” lit. means “to surpass,” so either better or worse is possible. Ultimately it will make no difference how it is translated because the conclusion is that we are all CONDEMNED!

Next puzzle is : Who are the “we?” We Jews?

The best explanation, it seems to me, is that Paul is asking,
“Are we Christians,” Paul and the believers in Rome;
“Are we better than those already mentioned?”

And the answer is “Not at all.”

Why Paul? Why “not at all?” Because we are all “under sin.”

People do not just commit sin; they are “**under sin.**”

We will say more about this distinction later.

Paul goes to the Scripture to make his argument. “**As it is written:**”

It is important to keep the Old Testament in view as we study Romans. Here he quotes from the Psalms and Isaiah, and perhaps Ecclesiastes. A careful comparison will bring out that Paul changes a word to maintain his arguments.

E.g., vs 10b-12 is from the Septuagint {Greek Old Testament translation}.

Psalm 14:1-3 which reads: “*there is no one who does good.*”

Paul quotes: “*there is no one righteous*” which could refer to Eccl 7:20, “*There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*” The word “righteous” is so important to Paul’s argument that he could very well, under the Holy Spirit, make this change himself.

We will take the time to look at each OT Scripture that Paul quotes.

Vs 10-12 establish the general point of universal human sin.

Romans

Vs 13-14 focuses on sins of speech, referring to a different organ of speech in each of the four lines.

Vs 15-17 enumerates sins of violence against others.

Vs 18 returns to where he began: the basic human disregard for sin.

Vs 19-20 is the conclusion.

Please notice that in the context of the Psalms, and probably the Isaiah passage, focuses on the wicked, or unrighteous people, in distinction to the righteous Israelites. We would have never guessed this from just reading Romans.

- **Read Psalm 14: 1-7 {Cf. Romans 3:10b-12}**

1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, *There is none who does good.*

2 The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if *there are any who understand, who seek God.* 3 *They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.*

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call on the LORD? 5 There they are in great fear, For God is with the generation of the righteous. 6 You shame the counsel of the poor, But the LORD is his refuge. 7 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

- **Psalm 5:5-10 {Cf. Romans 3:13a}**

5 The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.

6 You shall destroy those who speak falsehood;
The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.

Romans

9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is destruction;
Their throat is an open tomb;
They flatter with their tongue.

10 Pronounce them guilty, O God!
Let them fall by their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions,
For they have rebelled against You.

- **Psalm 140:1-4 {Cf. Romans 3:13b}**

1 Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men,
2 Who plan evil things in their hearts; They continually gather together for war. 3
They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; *The poison of asps is under their lips.*
Selah

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from violent men, Who have purposed to make my steps stumble.

- **Psalm 10:4-7 {Cf. Romans 3:14}**

4 The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God;
God is in none of his thoughts. 5 His ways are always prospering;
Your judgments are far above, out of his sight;
As for all his enemies, he sneers at them.
6 He has said in his heart, "I shall not be moved; I shall never be in adversity."

7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue is trouble and iniquity.

- **Isaiah 59:4-10 {Cf. Romans 3:15-17}**

4 No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words
and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. 5 They hatch vipers'
eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And from that
which is crushed a viper breaks out. 6 Their webs will not become garments, Nor
will they cover themselves with their works; Their works are works of iniquity,

Romans

And the act of violence is in their hands. *7 Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood;* Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; *Wasting and destruction are in their paths.* *8 The way of peace they have not known,* And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. 9 Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! 10 We grope for the wall like the blind, And we grope as if we had no eyes; We stumble at noonday as at twilight; We are as dead men in desolate places.

- **Psalm 36:1-4** {Cf. Romans 3:18}

1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:

There is no fear of God before his eyes.

2 For he flatters himself in his own eyes, When he finds out his iniquity and when he hates. 3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good. 4 He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way that is not good; He does not abhor evil.

* * * * *

Now did you notice that the context of the Scriptures Paul employed focused on the wicked, or unrighteous people, in distinction to the righteous Israelites. As I have pointed out, we would have never guessed this from just reading Romans.

What does this mean? The gospel of Christ, which is defined as the righteousness of God, is appropriated only through faith in Jesus Christ. Here in these verses, Paul assigns **everyone** to the category of the unrighteous.

There is none righteous, all are **“under sin!”**

Let’s return now to that phrase in vs 9, **“they are all under sin.”**

Paul does not say that all people “commit sins.” Although that is true.

Nor does he even say that all people are “sinners.” Although that is true.

What he says is that all people are “under sin.” This language refers to a situation of dominance or slavery. Cf. Galatians 3:22 *“But the Scripture has*

Romans

confined all under sin, {lit. “held a prisoner under sin.”} *so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.”*

The problem then, is not that we commit sin, or even that we are in the habit of committing sins, the problem is that we are **helpless prisoners of sin.**

Knowing this truth, that all people are “under sin,” will form your world view. Marxist, e.g., believe that the basic human problem is the uneven distribution of wealth. Their solution, therefore, is state control over the economy so that there will be no more rich and no more poor. Every one will have the same. Of course, nowhere that Marxism has been tried has that ever been true. Communist Marxism is a failed system.

Humanistic Philosophy teaches that the basis problem is ignorance. If people just had knowledge they would be better and the problems of the world will disappear. So the ad campaigns to inform children of the dangers of smoking are designed to give them **knowledge** and then they will not start smoking. But if Paul is right the problem with children is that they are **under sin** and cannot resist the peer pressure to smoke no matter how much they understand its dangers. The same with drugs and unmarried sex; lack of knowledge is certainly not the problem.

What we all need is not only to be better informed; we need the One who has the power to set us free from the bondage of sin, even the Lord Jesus Christ!

Verse 19 This is one of the rare places where Paul uses “law” to refer to the Old Testament as a whole. Everyone, Gentile and Jew, without exception stands condemned by God. The image is awesome. The whole world stands before the most Holy God and the records are read, the secrets of men are revealed, their sin is exposed, and they have no answer. Their mouths are silenced, stopped!

Verse 20 Conclusion! *“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be **justified** in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

Why is this an irrefutable conclusion? Remember what the law demands; and nothing less: *To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and that he love his neighbor as himself.”*

Romans

Speak up, have you met this simple requirement?

Then don't bring up any lesser "deeds of the law" that someone has invented. Some preachers say, "God will save you if only you will {fill in the blank }. What follows will be their version of some "deeds of the law," by which "no flesh will be **justified**."

One example of "deeds of the law," includes the claim of exclusiveness, that is, to be saved you must be a member of a particular group.

Who makes such a claim? Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic,
Primitive Baptists, Church of Christ, et al.
They all rule from fear!

As Paul comes to the end of this section { 1:18 - 3:20 } he contrasts "wrath" to "being justified."

Justified? What does that mean to you?

Pardon? Your sins have been forgiven? It is more than forgiveness of sin.

Pardon and restored to favor? It is more than that.

To be made holy? To be made pure?
To be justified based on an inward change.
That's what many people believe.

That is the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; **infused** righteousness.

Justification is the primary issue of the Reformation.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church:

- a. Forgiveness of sin on the merits of Christ.
- b. Removal of inherent sin by "grace."
- c. The **infusion** of "grace" through baptism and the sacraments.
Progressive righteousness; you become more and more holy.
But this righteousness may be lost through a mortal sin.
- d. But through the sacrament of penance, "grace" can be restored.
- e. And everyone must go through "purgatory" to be completely justified.

Romans

Here is the **fatal error** of the Roman Catholic Church:
They teach that you are justified **because** you have been made holy.

What then is **justification**? What is your conception right now??

Justification is a **judicial** act by God. It is objective! Outside of you!
It is a forensic act, i.e., having to do with legal proceedings.

Justification is a **declaration** that justice is satisfied.
No more condemnation!

Declared to be righteous, not **made** to be righteous.

Justification is the antithesis of condemnation;
the removal of condemnation by fiat, by God's declaration.

The one who is **actually guilty** is declared **not guilty**!

Having been justified; we are free from the guilt of sin.

God **regards** us as not guilty!

Righteousness is **imputed** not **infused**!

Chapter Five deals with the Doctrine of Representation, but it is important in our discussion of justification to understand **imputation**.
To "impute" is to reckon or charge to one's account.

IMPUTATION:

When our representative Adam, sinned, his guilt was **imputed** to everyone that he represented, viz. the entire human race, the Man Jesus being the only exception. This was a legal transaction. You and I are considered guilty. Adam's guilt is imputed. God considers Adam's sin as belonging to me and to you.

When Jesus died on the cross, the sin of His people was **imputed** to Him. He who knew no sin, was considered to be sin for us.
God considers my sin to belong to Christ.

When, by faith, I trust in Jesus, the righteousness of God is **imputed** to me.

Romans

God considers Christ's righteousness as belonging to me.

There, the great transaction is done! Hallelujah!

Justification is always the opposite of condemnation

The meaning of Justification is always consistent in the Bible.

Cf. Deut 25:1 "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify [declare] the righteous and condemn the wicked."

The judges **declare**, they do not make anyone righteous or wicked.

Cf. Proverbs 17:15 "He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord."

Cf. Romans 8:30 "Moreover whom He **predestined**, these He also called; whom He **called**, these He also justified; and whom He **justified**, these He also **glorified**."

There is another important distinction that lies at the heart of the gospel.

Justification waits on faith!

The **fatal error** of the Primitive Baptists is the false doctrine of "eternal justification." They ignore the necessity for "calling."

Therefore, they do not preach the gospel to the lost. They deny the use of means, i.e., that God uses the preaching of the the gospel to call the lost to salvation in Christ. But John 6:37 records Jesus as saying, "*All that the Father gives to Me, shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*"

Therefore they do not believe that one must believe in Christ in this life to be saved in heaven. Romans 3:26 will not allow that interpretation to be true.

Romans

Justification is the **judicial** act of God in which He **declares** us righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We have **not** been **made** righteous, but we are **regarded** as righteous; and are no longer regarded as guilty.

Here is a most important point; don't miss this!

There is no change in our nature. Justification is a purely judicial, objective act of God. Why is this important? Although I am justified, declared not guilty, my nature is still sinful.

This is why many people have no assurance. When I look inward I will only see corruption and I think, I am not holy, therefore, I must not be justified. It is not my **inward state**, but my **objective standing**.

Henry Mahan told of a time when someone expressed doubt about their salvation. They repented, they confessed Christ as their only hope but said they had serious doubt. His question was what is it that you doubt? Do you doubt the sufficiency of Christ to save? Do you doubt His willingness to save the repentant sinner? The problem is that if you look inward for assurance you will never find it. Assurance is not subjective feelings. Instead of doubt the word should be disgust.

So look only to Christ and not to your feelings.

God regards me as righteous on the merits of Christ.
The just shall live by faith! Habakkuk 2:4

Is that not the best news you ever heard?

It's the righteousness of God Himself that God charges to my account!

We will come back to the doctrine of sanctification later in our exposition.

Justification is the forensic, judicial act of God the Father.
Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit inside me.

Justification is a one time legal transaction, not a process.
Sanctification deals with my inward pollution and it is a process.

Romans

You will never have assurance as long as you look within.
Look to Christ and His righteousness.

Finally, What does the law do? It clearly cannot justify, for “by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight,” but “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law is what made sin to be sin, Cf. 7:7.

When God the Holy Spirit reveals the wrath of God, and the sinner is gripped by his guilt before God; may it please the Holy Spirit to quicken him and thus reveal to him the righteousness of God; even the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Next time, by God’s grace, we will take up the righteousness of God,