

“There Is None Righteous, Not Even One”
(Romans 3:9-17)

I. Introduction.

A. Review.

1. Paul has argued that all the Gentiles are without excuse before God.
2. Then he showed the Jews that they are in the exact situation.
3. The fact that they were God’s covenant people gave them an advantage, but they didn’t use those advantages and ended up in a worse condition.

B. Paul’s conclusion.

1. Now that Paul has finished dealing with their objections, he now draws his arguments to their conclusion – to the point he was driving at.
2. He says, “What then?” or in other words, “What is the conclusion of these things?”
3. The question is, “Are we better than they?”
 - a. That is, are we (Jews) better than they (the Gentiles)?
 - b. I think you know Paul’s answer at this point: “Not at all.”
 - (i) The Jews might have thought they were better, but they really weren’t.
 - (ii) It appears as though the book of Romans was written mainly to destroy this confidence of the Jews and to show them – as well as the Gentiles – their need of Christ.
 - (iii) The grand conclusion is: “Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.”
4. What I want us to consider for a few minutes this morning is the clear teaching of Scripture that every single person who has ever been born in this world, and who ever will be born – excepting Christ only – has been born in sin and is absolutely unable to save himself or herself or do anything at all pleasing to God.

II. Sermon.

A. Consider first that Paul says both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin.

1. First, they are all born in sin. This was also true of us.
 - a. David writes in Psalm 51, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (v. 5).
 - b. At the moment of conception, we were guilty.
 - c. Paul will tell us later in this letter it’s because of Adam’s sin reckoned to our account.
2. Second, because we were born in sin, we were under the guilt of sin.
 - a. James writes, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all” (2:10).
 - b. We were not only guilty of Adam’s sin, but of all the sins we had committed.
 - c. In fact, because we had broken one, we were guilty of breaking all.
3. Third, we were under the burden of sin.
 - a. Sin was like a weight that would have pressed us down into hell.
 - b. John writes concerning the wicked on the Day of Judgment, “And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).
4. Last, because we were born in sin, we were under its power and dominion. We were the slaves of sin who had nothing to look forward to but death and damnation.
 - a. Paul tells the believers in Romans 6, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome

of those things is death. . . . For the wages of sin is death” (vv. 20-21, 23).

- b. All we had to look forward to was God’s wrath. Again Paul writes in Ephesians 2, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature *children of wrath*, even as the rest” (vv. 1-3; italics added).
- c. The conclusion is: all are under sin. We were under sin.

B. Now because this was true of us, certain other things were true as well, the most important being that we could not do anything that was pleasing to God.

1. Paul gives several quotes now from the OT to show us what man is like apart from God’s grace.

- a. These are quotes from various parts of the OT.
- b. Or they could be a quote from the LXX version of Psalm 14:1-3, which reads, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They have corrupted themselves, and become abominable in their devices; there is none that does goodness, there is not even so much as one. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that understood, or sought after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become good for nothing, there is none that does good, no not one. 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; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

2. Look into the mirror of the Word, as James says, and consider what your natural face looked like apart from Christ (James 1:23).

- a. There is none righteous, not even one (Ps. 14; 53):
 - (i) David wrote, “The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside” (Ps. 14:2-3).
 - (ii) The same was true in the days of Noah: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). God destroyed the world then because of man’s wickedness.
 - (iii) God had made the world good, now it was bad. He made man in His image, but man had lost his moral likeness to God.
 - (iv) Now there was nothing good in man at all.
 - (v) The only reason Noah found favor was because of God’s grace in him.
 - (vi) The only reason God doesn’t destroy the world now is because of His work of calling others out of the world.
- b. There is no one who understands:
 - (i) It’s not that they don’t understand anything.
 - (ii) They know the truth, but hate it.
 - (iii) They don’t desire it, so they put it out of their minds.
 - (iv) They don’t understand its beauty. They are blind to it.
- c. There is none who seeks for God: they hate Him and will not seek Him.
- d. All have turned aside, together they have become useless:
 - (i) They are unprofitable for any good work.
 - (ii) There is nothing of any value in them.
 - (iii) All have turned out of the path of righteousness.
- e. There is none who does good:
 - (i) No one does anything good in God’s eyes.

- (ii) For something to be truly good, it must be done the right way – according to God’s Word – with the right motive – love for God – and with the right goal – God’s glory.
 - (iii) Anyone might be able to do something outwardly good, but no one can do something truly good, out of love for God and a desire for His glory, apart from the grace of God in Christ.
- f. There is none who does good; there is not even one: There are no exceptions.
 - g. This is evidenced by their words:
 - (i) Their throat is an open grave (Ps. 5:9), with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips (Ps. 140:3); whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness (Ps. 10:7).
 - (ii) They are cruel in their words, hurt with them, deceive with them (like their father the devil), curse with them (James 3:9).
 - h. This is evidenced by their ways: Their feet are swift to shed blood (Pr. 1:16); destruction and misery are in their paths; and the path of peace they have not known (Is. 59:8): they do not know how to preserve peace for themselves (with God) or others, and don’t want to know.
 - i. And the root of it all is: There is no fear of God before their eyes (Ps. 36:1):
 - (i) They have no grace, nothing of the Spirit of God in their hearts.
 - (ii) They don’t have a serious regard for the word and will of God, for His honor and glory.
 - (iii) They don’t fear the Lord and run from evil. They desire their own things.
 - (iv) The fear of the Lord is to turn from evil. It restrains from wickedness. Without it, people run headlong into sin, which is what they do.

III. Application.

A. What Paul says here applies to all men.

1. This is what we were like before the Lord had mercy on us.
2. This is what all men are like now apart from Christ: totally depraved.
 - a. It doesn’t mean that they can’t do anything outwardly good.
 - b. It doesn’t mean they never come to church.
 - c. It doesn’t mean they don’t do some kind of seeking after God or some higher power.
 - d. It means that they have no real love for God and so don’t really want to find Him or glorify Him.
 - e. No one in this condition can do anything that is pleasing to God.

B. First, this should give to us as saints a reason truly to thank the Lord.

1. You didn’t want Christ.
2. But He had mercy on you anyway and saved you.
3. He gave you His Spirit, a new heart, the new birth, opened your eyes to see your need and the glory of Christ, faith to embrace Him.
4. It was not your doing. It was first to last of the Lord.

C. Second, this should point those of you here this morning who don’t Christ in the right direction.

1. Jeremiah said to the rebellious Jews, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? *Then* you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil” (Jer. 13:23). They couldn’t and neither can you.
2. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44).
3. You can’t come to God by yourself.
 - a. No one ever has.
 - b. You need the new birth.
 - c. And only Christ can give it to you by His Spirit.
 - d. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

- e. God must open your eyes, or you will never see.
- f. If that is the case with you, come to Christ and ask Him to open your eyes, so that you might believe in Him and be saved. Amen.