



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

## **A Serious Problem**

June 9, 2019

Romans 3:9-18

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*<sup>9</sup> What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, <sup>10</sup> as it is written:*

*"None is righteous, no, not one;*

*<sup>11</sup> no one understands;*

*no one seeks for God.*

*<sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;*

*no one does good,*

*not even one."*

*<sup>13</sup> "Their throat is an open grave;*

*they use their tongues to deceive."*

*"The venom of asps is under their lips."*

*<sup>14</sup> "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."*

*<sup>15</sup> "Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

*<sup>16</sup> in their paths are ruin and misery,*

*<sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they have not known."*

*<sup>18</sup> "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

*(Pastor prays)*

From time to time in an effort to do my fair share of work around the house, I'll do some laundry. But I've had to learn a few hard lessons about why you don't put colors with whites when you wash them in hot water. I did that once. After cramming all the towels and other whites in the washer, I also threw in a new, red T-shirt. I turned on the hot water and took satisfaction in my good ability to rightly help my wife.

But if you have any laundry experience, you know what happened. Every white garment in that load now had a thorough and permanent pink hue. The towels still functioned and the undershirts were still wearable, they were just stained throughout. So it is with sin. We don't just sin by *action* (verb), we are *sinner*s (noun).

What you have before you is the most explicit description of total depravity in the entire Bible. Total depravity does not mean we are as bad as we can possibly be; but it does mean that there is not one part of us that hasn't been thoroughly stained by sin. If the color of sin were red, we would all be a shade of pink. And in this passage, Paul is concluding his entire argument up to this point.

In chapter 1:16, Paul tells us what the Gospel is. It is the power of God for Salvation for anyone who believes, the Jew first and then the gentiles. And then he proceeds to tell us how all the gentiles are sinners. In Chapter 2 he tells us how all Jews are sinners, thereby saying that everyone who has ever been born was born a sinner.

Now this passage is not for the faint of heart but it should be permanently engraved on all of our hearts. This passage describes the human condition in dreadful terms. What Paul presents here is a comprehensive autopsy of a spiritually dead sinner, and it should make us run to the only one who can actually raise the dead-in-sin. This passage puts us on a collision course with our world and most of so-called Christianity. But you are not ready to hear the Gospel until you understand this passage.

### **We Are Dead without God's Grace in Jesus**

#### **The sin problem is universal**

Let's jump in at verse 9. Paul asks the same questions he asked back in verse 1. What advantage is there? Are Jews any better off? And look how he answers it. <sup>9</sup>*What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.* Jews and gentiles alike are under sin. They are not tainted by it, not prone to it, not scratched by sin, not sick with sin. All are *under* sin. The weight is so heavy it presses down upon us. The burden of sin is so tremendous it crushes our souls.

A mountain of sin has fallen on us and we are helplessly buried beneath it. We are under an ocean of sin that presses down on us with unrelenting force and we have no way to escape and no strength to save ourselves. Our only hope is a rescuer. His name is Jesus and by His cross He

has plunged the depth of sin to save us. Why would you *not* repent and believe in Jesus? Let's read verses 10-12 together and listen as Paul heaps word upon word and brick upon brick to show us our problem.

<sup>10</sup> *as it is written:*

*"None is righteous, no, not one;*

<sup>11</sup> *no one understands;*

*no one seeks for God.*

<sup>12</sup> *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;*

*no one does good,*

*not even one."*

There are 15 *wrong* things in this passage. He has pulled verses from the Old Testament to show us our need for a new covenant. Do you hear how pervasive and universal our problem is? None is righteous, not *one*. Not *one* person on this planet when judged against God's righteousness is found righteous. There is no room for exceptions. It's why we need the pureness and righteousness of Christ. He died on the cross to pay for our sins and to give us His righteousness. So when you are in Christ, God sees not *your* sin but the goodness of *Jesus*. It's why you need Christ.

Look what else is in verse 11. No one *understands*. First Corinthians 2:14 Tells us that natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. What does that mean? It means without the Spirit's conviction, we don't *understand* how holy God is and we certainly don't understand how awful sin is. Without the enlivening Spirit of God, we don't understand guilt and we don't understand grace.

And because of that, verse 11 tells us, no one seeks for God. That's not to say that people all over the world don't seek to worship. They do. The Bible tells us that God has put eternity into the heart of man. People don't seek *God*, they seek what God can *do* for them. That's why the prosperity gospel is so popular. People don't seek *God*; they seek the *things* of God. They seek peace and not the Prince of Peace. They seek health and not the one by whose stripes we are healed. They seek purpose but reject His sovereign purposes.

They seek meaning without Lordship and joy without sacrifice, success without suffering and salvation without the cross. They don't seek after God; the seeking after God is what the

believer does. They don't seek God; God seeks you. Jesus said, "I have come to seek and save the lost." If you are feeling convicted or curious about Jesus or you are desiring to know more about God, that's good news, because that is God seeking after you to fix your eyes on Jesus. His life, death and resurrection. God is the seeker, we are the sought. He is the savior and in Christ we are saved.

Paul finishes this section with a flourish. Let's take a look at verse 12. <sup>12</sup> *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;*

*no one does good,  
not even one."*

Look at this terrible description: turn aside, worthless, no one does good, not one. Let's pause here and think about what Paul is and is not saying. Paul isn't saying that people don't ever do good things. Common grace tells us that there are some so-called "good people" in the world -- the milk of human kindness.

What he is saying is that none of those good things we do ever match up to the holy righteousness of God. He will later say that our righteousness is like filthy rags. It's why we need the sinless, righteous life of Christ to cover us. Don't you see? The sin problem is universal and we are dead in sin without God's grace for us in Jesus Christ. That was the first section, let's take a look at this second section. The sin problem is universal.

### **The sin problem is evident in our actions**

Let's read verses 13-17 and notice the mouth and feet. It's what we do and what we say.

<sup>13</sup> *"Their throat is an open grave;*

*they use their tongues to deceive."*

*"The venom of asps is under their lips."*

<sup>14</sup> *"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."*

<sup>15</sup> *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

<sup>16</sup> *in their paths are ruin and misery,*

<sup>17</sup> *and the way of peace they have not known."*

Notice there are four things that characterize the speech of an unbeliever. Verse 13 says "their throats are an open grave," the stench of rotting flesh and death. Putrefaction. Verse 13 says "their tongues speak deception," telling you what you want to hear. It says the lips are full of

the poison of a cobra snake and ready to paralyze and kill. Verse 14 says the mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Now that's a pretty foul mouth right there. It will take more than washing out with soap. Our language is a reflection of our heart. Proverbs 10:11 says, *The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.* Jesus said in Luke 6:45, *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

Do you ever say hurtful things, abusive things? Parents have sinned against their children; children have sinned against their parents, husband against wife. According to this passage, one of the indicators of not knowing Christ is that your mouth is like a cobra snake ready to poison someone.

That was words. Now let's look at the deeds described in verses 15,16 and 17. <sup>15</sup> *“Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

<sup>16</sup> *in their paths are ruin and misery,*

<sup>17</sup> *and the way of peace they have not known.”*

Verse 15 speaks of the anger and rage that so many people live with. It leads to abuse and violence and hate, and if it weren't for the restraining grace of God, many of us would be given over to killing someone. Verse 16 says this lifestyle creates two things: ruin and misery. Ruin. That's the harm *you* cause *other* people in a life without Christ. If you have ever loved someone who was living a sinful life, then you have felt this. There are many hurting parents and grandparents in this congregation, many abused women who have tried to love someone like this and it's ruin.

The other word in verse 16, describing this kind of life, is “misery.” That's the harm that sin brings to the sinner. If you are the one causing the pain— let's say you are an addict or a rage-holic or an adulterer— you have felt this, the crushing guilt of hurting people.

In fact, verse 17 provides somewhat of a summation of what it looks like to live this life without Christ: “The way of peace they've not known.” No real lasting peace of mind. The truth of the matter is that none of us really knows the way of peace, and Paul sums up the entire human problem in verse 18: *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”* All this talk about sin is just a reminder. Sin is fundamentally God-centered. We forget about God, we forsake and abandon God. To fear God means I'm afraid to be *without* God. To fear God is to love and worship God, to know God through the grace given to us in Jesus.

Paul points out the universal problem so that we will run to the one and only savior, Jesus Christ, to be saved. Saved by His life, saved by His death, saved by His resurrection. Come to Jesus and be saved.

*(Pastor prays)*