

Confronting the reality of sin

- *If you study human history, you will see that one of the single greatest constants in all cultures, all people, for all time, is also one of the most ignored attributes in all cultures, all people for all time. This is the reality that in the human condition, something has gone terribly wrong.*
- *Throughout history people have described the symptoms of this problem, describing behaviors such as jealousy, hatred, selfishness, narcissism, fear, lust, vain-glory, and the like.*
- *While humans have always acknowledged that our condition is universally plagued by these 'evils', what is almost wholly ignored, outside of religious thought, of WHY THIS CONDITION EXISTS.*
- *In the opening 3.5 chapters of Romans, Paul answers this question, and in doing so articulates one of the most essential realities of a biblical worldview- the condition that has corrupted the entire human race, stemming from our core refusal to recognize and turn to God, that the Bible calls SIN.*
- *KEY!! We have now spent 4 weeks walking through Paul's systematic explanation of what sin is, and why we, in our human nature, have no remedy for it. IT IS EASY TO TAKE OFFENSE at Paul's message, and the people who originally heard these words certainly did. BUT FRIENDS, THE DOCTRINE OF SIN IS ESSENTIAL to understanding not only the reality of the human condition (which we ignore at our own folly), BUT to understanding GODS PROVISION TO BE HEALED, SET FREE FROM THIS congenital disease of the human soul.*
- *HEAR- over the centuries plenty of people have taken Paul's words in this first section of Romans and used them to condemn other people, and to lock people up with the chains of guilt and fear in the bondage of religious legalism. THAT IS NOT WHAT GOD IS DOING HERE! It is essential to understand, as we conclude this opening section of Romans, that EVERYTHING Paul is saying about the devastating reality of sin is laying the necessary groundwork- making the necessary diagnosis- so that the CURE CAN BE MADE KNOWN. Because it is out of the ashes of our failure before God that God responds with AMAZING HOPE of the Gospel that Paul will spend the rest of his incredible letter unpacking.*
- *SO: While Romans 1 details the reality of humanities sin against God, and each other, we could then sum up chapter 2 with the following three big truths...*

A synopsis of Romans chapter 2:

- † **By knowledge of the written moral law, or by humanities inherent knowledge of God's essential moral character, every human being is ACCOUNTABLE to God for how we actually LIVE.**
- *Most important attribute... How we DO or DO NOT show love in relationship to our fellow human being*
- † **Judgment belongs to God, not to US.**
- † **Being accountable for our sin, LAW is of no help.**
- *The universal 'law' of ALL systems of moral law- even if we agree with the moral law- is that we fail to keep it! Therefore, when it comes to confronting our issue of sin, our possession, or knowledge, of God's moral law- what is right and wrong- is of no help!*
- *This must have come as a shock to the Jewish believers in the first generation church, because everything about their upbringing- their very identity as Jews, their hope of*

salvation, rightness with God, was that they possessed the LAW- and even more, they possessed the physical mark of God's covenant with them, the practice of circumcision.

- In very clear words, Paul says to his Jewish brothers and sisters- and to US- "that law is no help to you, because you do not keep it. Circumcision is no help to you, because you don't obey God's law.
- NOW, as we move into chapter three, Paul answers a question that had to be on his Jewish friends minds- If the law and circumcision don't help us be right with God, then why even be Jewish!! EVEN MORE, if we have been so unfaithful to God, has he been unfaithful to us?

✠ Is God Faithful?

Romans 3:1-4 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ² Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

- YES! God's work through the Jews is incredibly significant- VERY WORDS... COVENANTS- THE LAW! THE PROPHETS. God's work through human history that had all been leading up to the life of Jesus, this had all happened through the Jews!
- NOW, it SEEMS like Paul had more to say here... "First of all"... but its like he lost his train of thought, and just moved on to the bigger question in his mind of God's faithfulness. (he will return to Jews later)

³ What if some (the Jews) were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴ Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

- Easy passage to skip over, but Paul is hitting at something deep in how we often think about God. Have you ever doubted God's faithfulness because of the actions of someone else, maybe a person who themselves was a believer?
- TRAGIC how many times we have seen people- often young people but not always- turn away from God because of the actions of the followers of God. THIS IS WHY THIS ENTIRE OPENING SECTION OF ROMANS IS SO IMPORTANT! We are all fallen! NOT AN EXCUSE, but it is a REALITY, a reality that Christ came to deliver us from.
- Pauls point here is simple- even if every human being disagreed with God about something, God would still be right. GOD IS GOD, WE ARE NOT.
- Almost in response, Paul anticipates one last objection to our problem with sin...

✠ A final objection

Romans 3:5-8 But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)

- Hey God, why are you upset, since our unfaithfulness makes your faithfulness even clearer! Isn't that our job!

⁶ Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? ⁷ Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" ⁸ Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!

- It's easy to dismiss this argument as silly, except that we do it all the time! We try and justify our sin, our anger, our impatience, our judgmentalism, our rudeness, immaturity... LACK OF LOVE... because WE ARE RIGHT and they are wrong. PRIDE says I'm justified in

my actions, somebody else's fault, I excuse this unwise action because I'm after a greater good... NO!

- *MY PERSONAL STORY- how God changed my view of my own rebellion when I was a young man...*

✠ **THE VERDICT:** The bad news that NO ONE is righteous.

3:9-20 *What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written:*

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

¹³ "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know."

¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

¹⁹ Now 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 held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

- *Therefore NO ONE will be declared righteous because of their OWN PERSONAL GOODNESS. We've all fallen short. None of us measure up. Paul has made his point, exhaustively, and by any measure, it seems to be really bad news.*
- *At this point in any good story that the hero- the good guys- seem to be totally defeated. Enemy is on verge of triumph... tiny spark of light, and the tide turns... RIGHT HERE, in the ashes of our failure as humanity... we SEE THE FIRST LIGHT OF HOPE!*

✠ Why the bad news is really GOOD NEWS!

- *Because EVERY HUMAN BEING IN HISTORY has fallen short of God's goodness*

- We are ALL in this together!

- *Leads to love, compassion, PATIENCE, for fellow man. (jerk in roundabout)*

- We are ALL set free from PERFORMANCE!

- *God's love for us, our hope of Goodness, significance, acceptance, is NOT based on our performance. Old hymn.. Just as I am...*

- *BECAUSE God isn't a god of PBA...*

- We are ALL set free from the soul sucking curse of LEGALISM!

- *God cares how we live! Of course he does! But Christ came to SET US FREE, to GIVE US LIFE... and legalism robs us of both of these... MUCH MORE to come...*

- We are ALL set free from the joy killing curse of being JUDGMENTAL!

- *Thinking we are better than others is the great temptation of our pride... and it kills us. It steals our joy. Think of a person with superiority complex... they are not happy!*

- We are ALL offered the miraculous Hope of the Magnificent Alternative that begins in Romans 3:21

- *BUT NOW! APART from the law... the grace of God-*

- *Through the law we become conscious of our sin... LORD, give us the faith, the courage, to let your Holy Spirit make us conscious of our sin, our immaturity, our fear, our judgmentalism... NOT to lead us into guilt and shame, but to OPEN OUR EYES TO THE FREEDOM YOU OFFER.*