

# Truth for Today

*The Bible Explained*

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## The Epistle to the Romans: Sins - The whole world (all three groups) are guilty before God (Romans 3:9-20)

*Guilty before a holy God,  
The whole world was condemned.  
Its sinful people had no hope  
To Hell, they would descend.  
Yet God, who knew their dreadful state,  
Sent His dear Son to die.  
A willing, perfect sacrifice  
To bring lost sinners nigh.*

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During the previous talks on Romans we have seen how the Gentiles (that is, people who were not Jews) were guilty before a righteous God. They were without excuse (Romans 1:20) because God had revealed Himself to them through creation; but they excused themselves from such a truth. Although conscious of His glories, they did not give Him the honour due to His name. They turned from Him to adopt the worship of man-made idols instead. Serving the creature, rather than the Creator (see Romans 1:25), they sought only self-gratification. This was clearly seen in abnormal sexual lusts (see Romans 1:26-27) which are still prevalent today. Their shameful acts were evidence to the fact that they had become completely debased. Their sinful natures were given full license and resulted in terrible wickedness. The consequence is summarised in Romans 2:5 where Paul stated that they were treasuring up wrath against themselves for the day of judgment.

Likewise, the Jews who had the advantage of being blessed with the oracles of God (See Romans 3:2), could not keep His commandments. They also deserved to be judged. In Romans 3:9-12 we read of Paul, himself a Jew, summarising their condition in this way: *"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

The Apostle, Paul, has revealed that both the Gentiles and the Jews lack any righteousness before God. Today's passage goes on to show the complete ruin of all men and concludes that the whole world is guilty before God.

Returning to Romans 3:9-12 we have seen that the Apostle argues that the place of outward privilege is an advantage to the religious man. The Apostle asks, *"Are we Jews better than the Gentiles?"* He answers his own question by going on to show the awful condition all men. In so doing, he quotes seven passages from the Old Testament Scriptures, which describe man in his natural, sinful condition (called the flesh). The verses apply to both Jew and Gentile, and prove that all are under sin. Therefore, the privileged Jew is no better than the Gentile.

The first quotation is from Psalm 14. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek Him. The statement that follows was the answer to God's searching gaze: *"They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Psalm 14:3) The filth of their nature tainted their understanding and their works. They were unable to please God in thought or action. Therefore, no person can justify himself before God.

Looking in more detail, we read in Romans 3:10: *"There is none righteous, no, not one"*. The self-righteousness of mankind is condemned by God. Isaiah 64:6 reminds us: *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* It is hard for people to believe that all our righteousnesses, that is to say, all our so-called good works, are as filthy rags in God's sight and that there is not one he counts to be righteous. It may be said, "Surely there must be a few righteous people!" But, in the context of scripture, God says, *"Not one."* This does not imply that there are no honourable men according to man's standards; but that not one of us has given God the honour due to His name. We ought to *"love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind"* (see Deuteronomy 6:4-7,

Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27". But no person has naturally done so. Therefore, no man has, by his own efforts, achieved the standard demanded by this righteous God.

Secondly, we read in Romans 3:11: "*There is none that understands.*" The intelligence of man is very great, but he does not understand God. If he did then he would reverently fear Him and respect Him. This is supported by Proverbs 9:10, where we find: "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*"

Often, it is the people who claim the greatest intelligence or nobility who are the most ignorant of God. They are so taken up with their own flawed reasoning that they leave God out of the reckoning. Intellectual pride and their high-sounding philosophies hinder true understanding. Of course, there have been, in the past, some noble people who have placed God at the centre of their reasoning. For example, most presidents of America have been Christians and numerous scientists of note throughout history have been Christians also. The Apostle Paul sums up the matter in 1 Corinthians 1:25-27: "*...The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*" It is noteworthy that it was some of the nobler in the estimation of this world who crucified the Son of God (1 Corinthians 2:8). Hence, we conclude that neither our personal wisdom nor our reason, will ever give us any real advantage in knowing the truth about God. In fact, 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul states: "*...The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*"

Thirdly, in the second part of Romans 3:11, we read: "*There is none that seeketh after God.*" In other words, people don't want God in their lives. The Bible commentator, Hamilton Smith, explains this succinctly: "The religion of the natural man has the appearance of seeking after God. Nevertheless a religion of works, barren moralities, and ritual observances, so far from seeking God, is, in reality an effort to quiet conscience, and keep God at a distance." (ISBN: 9780901860859: *The Epistle to the Romans: An Expository Outline*).

The author of Psalm 53:1 goes further, stating: "*The fool hath said in his heart, no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.*" The here word for "fool" means "stupid". That is how God sees the natural man.

Fourthly, in Romans 3:12, we read: "*They are all gone out of the way.*" Going our own way instead of going God's way is sin. It is not simply that man has wandered, but that, in His sinful state, he has deliberately turned his back on God and taken a path of his own choosing. Isaiah 53:6a: puts it this way: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...*" The Lord Jesus speaks of that way, saying, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*" (Matthew 7:13-14). The natural man is on the broad way. The spiritual man is on the strait or narrow way.

In the UK today, we find this God-denying attitude as the country's Christian standards in government has given way to secularism. Since, the last World War, there has been an increased move towards a society that leaves God out of the reckoning. Today, there are a few Christian politicians who, refusing to compromise their faith have had to leave their parties. The final consequences of this refusal of God's rights in government will include:

- Greater immorality;
- More disease;
- Increased corruption;
- Severe violence; and
- Lawlessness and apostasy.

Fifthly, when we turn to verse Romans 3:12, we find the words: "*They are together become unprofitable.*" This sentence shows that men are united in their degradation. They are of the same nature and, therefore, drag one another further into the mire of sin. Spiritually they are absolutely worthless.

Sixthly, we read: "*There is none that does good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12). As Christians, we may define a good work as one that is done in the will of God, to the benefit of others, with God getting the glory. Unbelieving people may do many charitable deeds, but they are always tainted by self in some way. They do not give the credit to the God who both made them and sustains their being. If the motive of heart is not good, nothing will make the act good in the sight of God. In fact, He describes the human heart as deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. In Matthew 7:18 the Lord Jesus distinguishes between a believer and unbeliever in this way: "*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*"

In the Scriptures that follow (Romans 3:13-18), the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth and the feet present different aspects of evil found in the human nature. We begin with Romans 3:13 where the throat is described as an open sepulchre. The open sepulchre speaks of insatiable death. We would call it "a death trap" today - constantly prepared to swallow whom it will. We see this in Pontius Pilate at the trial of Jesus. He called Christ a just person declaring that he could find no fault in Him (see John 18:38, John 19:4 and John 19:6). Also, he admitted that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death (Luke 23:15 and Luke 23:22), yet he still delivered Him up to be crucified and released the murderer, Barabbas, instead (see Matthew 27:26, Mark 15:15).

The tongues are seen as instruments of deceit. They are full of treachery. Herod's words to the wise men in Matthew 2:8 were full of deceit: *"Go and search carefully for the child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."* His interest in seeking this information was made clear later on when he slew the male children under two years of age in Bethlehem and its precincts. He had intended to slay the Christ Child, not to worship Him.

We then find: *"Under their lips lies the poison of asps"* (Romans 3:13). This symbolises the lips as agents of destruction and suggests the kind of slander that corrupts the reputations of others. The religious leaders of Jesus' day tried to denigrate His reputation by sending Pharisees and Herodians to test Him. In Mark 12:14-15 we read of them asking: *"Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"*

Jesus recognised their motive and said, *"Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it"* (Mark 12:15). They did so (Mark 12:16) and Jesus asked, *"Whose is this image and superscription?"* (Mark 12:16) They said, *"Caesar's"* (Mark 12:16). Then Jesus said, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"* (Mark 12:17). The Lord Jesus has seen through both their deceit and flattery and avoided the poisonous snare they had set.

Romans 3:14 shows that their mouth *"is full of cursing and bitterness."* In Psalm 5:9 we find the whole mouth belongs to those who are marked by wickedness. It is in Matthew 12:34 that the Lord Jesus tells us *"that it is from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34). A man is what he speaks. Before Pilate, the Jews had slandered Jesus using false witnesses and said, *"We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar"* (Luke 23:2). Then, seeing the reticence of Pilate, the chief priests expressed their bitterness by accusing Him more vehemently (see Luke 23:10).

In Romans 3:15, the feet of man are described as being *"swift to shed blood."* This means that people are not only murderous, but act quickly to be rid of any who offend them or have anything they covet. So it was with the Jewish leaders in relation to Christ. *"Let him be crucified!"* was their cry. The chief priests, scribes and elders had plotted against Him, paid for his betrayal, sought out false witnesses and pressurised Pilate to crucify Him - all because they envied His teaching, miracles and favour with the people. In fact, 1 John 3:15 goes further, by stating: *"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."*

*"Destruction and misery are in their ways,"* Paul writes in Romans 3:16. All the ways that men take bring ruin and calamity to their fellow creatures. Proverbs 16:25 reads: *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* This is certainly the result of the murderous acts mentioned previously. Just consider the words of the crowd when Jesus was handed over for crucifixion: *"His blood be on us and our children!"* (Matthew 27:25). Sadly, this was to be the case only a few years later.

In the final judgment, people steered by the flesh will have a terrible end. As previously noted, the broad way (the way of the wicked) leads to destruction. They, body and soul will suffer eternal ruin in hell (Matthew 10:28).

In Romans 3:17 we find that *"they have not known the way of peace."* Mankind is ignorant of true peace. Each person has violence as part of his nature. Many may dare to say, "I am not violent!" but given the right circumstances and provocation, we may all turn to it. Peace cannot exist without trust and there can be no trust without righteousness. Therefore, the natural man has no peace with God, the God whom he denies. He remains in his sin. Furthermore, he knows nothing of the peace of God which is the result of living a life of faith - all things working together for good to them that love God (see Romans 8:28).

The seventh quotation is listed in Romans 3:18 and comes from Psalm 36:1: *"There is no fear of God before his eyes."* Because of their violent and deceitful natures, humans may fear their fellows; but do not fear God. True wisdom, understanding and knowledge have their source in the fear of God. The "natural man" of the Bible has none of these. So the Apostle condemns the condition of fallen man and what a bleak condition it is. The full manifestation of this nature, called the "flesh", is often restricted, to some degree, by laws of the land, culture, religion and conscience. Nonetheless, given the right circumstances, it will manifest itself.

When we come to Romans 3:19 we find the statement: *“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”* The law is a plumb line that may be set against our lives. It reveals our sinfulness. It shows that both Jew and Gentile are guilty before God. Therefore, when God accuses, the natural man can offer no defence. He must be judged.

Very often, we hear the expression that “God helps those who help themselves”! If this were true then mankind would have been wiped out long ago. God, in His love, sent His only begotten Son into the world to take the judgment that we deserved. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He was made sin so that we, believing, might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Not only is our sinful nature judged, but God, through new birth, gives us a new nature which the opposite to the old one. So, in conclusion, we who do fear God may pray:

1. *Lord, make my throat a gate of life;  
My tongue of truth the stream.  
Oh, fill my lips with righteousness;  
May they with blessing teem.*
  
2. *Oh, may my feet be swift to aid  
All that I find in need.  
Oh, let Your joy and healing, Lord,  
Be found in every deed.*
  
3. *Lord, may Your fear in me reside  
That wisdom may prevail.  
Oh, let the way of peace be shown  
As I Your love unveil.*

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This solemn message from *Truth for Today* is entitled: “The whole world is guilty before God.” It is part of our series on the Epistle to the Romans and its reference number is 1084. Thank you for listening.

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