

Romans 3:9-18

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[0 : 00] Thank you, God, for letting me come and teach you this morning, preach the Word of God to you this morning.

It's a privilege every time, and it's a joy to study and to be able to have an opportunity like this. I want to start by posing a question. Do you know why the Gospel has lost its potency for so many of us?

Do you know why it is possible for you to come to church week after week, to hear the Gospel preached, and yet there be no change in your life? It is because you have lost your sense of your own sin.

You have lost your grasp of it. You have forgotten what you once were. And so the good news of Jesus Christ ceases to be what it is.

How many of you are experiencing today an amazing Jesus Christ? An irresistible Jesus Christ? A precious Jesus Christ? A felt Christ?

[1 : 10] How many of you? Has He changed or have you changed? Is it Christ that isn't cool as He used to be? Or is it that your affections for Him have been cooled?

By sin. Forgetfulness is the root of all sorts of evil in Christianity. And I want to talk about that today. I want to remind you of what you have been saved from.

Or what you have yet to be saved from. I would even venture to say that the only reason we ever sin is because we lose perspective. We forget how great Christ's love toward us is.

And with a weakened joy in God, we wander off to other seemingly more attractive alternatives. Forgetfulness kills Christianity. Kills sanctification.

Not one of us has rightly comprehended the magnitude of God's grace toward us. We all need to be daily reminded of our sin.

[2 : 09] Because a right understanding of what we once were is the only way by which we will be able and be moved to enjoy what Christ presently is and forever will be.

Okay? We have to be reminded of our sin, our depravity, our lack of Christ-likeness. Of what we once were before Christ ever came into our hearts.

Because a right understanding of what we once were is the only way by which we can be moved to enjoy rightly what Christ is presently today. He is an amazing, amazing Savior.

He is worthy to be worshipped in the right light. There may also be many of us in this room who need to be reminded of their sin this morning. Because a right understanding of what you are presently is the only way by which you may be moved to true saving repentance and faith in Christ. Some of you are still in your sin. You don't know Christ. You are still depraved. You are still in need of a Savior. And an understanding of your sin, a true understanding of your sin, of your offense against God is the only way that you can be saved.

[3 : 26] My hope is that you will leave here this morning with an impassioned love for Christ. Because of the strong reminder that I intend to give of your own sinfulness and thusly of Christ's amazing love.

So let me just pray real quick. In order for us to understand the text and the greatness of our sin and also the greatness of our Savior. Jesus Christ, we love you because you first loved us.

We are saved because you chose to save us. Not because there was anything inside of us that was worthy of your salvation. We have been given more grace than can be comprehended.

And so, Lord God, this morning we ask just for a further comprehension of what we already somewhat know but don't fully know. We pray to you with all of our heart, Lord, that you would give us just the understanding to know what it is that we've been saved from.

And not just this morning, but every morning. Lord, help us to be reminded of our depravity, of our need for a Savior. And help us to run to you, Lord, in joyful expectation of forgiveness and joyful expectation of grace to live the day, to live out the day in the way that you've called us to.

[4 : 37] Forgive us, Father God, for our forgetfulness. And just, Father, empower this message. Empower your word to do its work in your people, in your way. You know the hearts of the people that are here.

And I pray that you would touch them. In Christ's name. Amen. If you have your Bible, turn to Romans 3. We find ourselves at the climax of a long indictment that Paul's been giving against humanity.

The tension has been building since chapter 1, verse 18. And it's not going to actually stop until next week. So, this is kind of the climax of the tension and the bad news.

In chapter 1, Paul proved the guilt of the Gentiles. That everyone that is not a Jew is under sin, is in need of Christ.

In chapter 2, he proves the guilt of the Jews. In the beginning of chapter 3, as we studied last week, he begins to answer some questions that would logically be posed by the readers of this book.

[5 : 41] And now we come to verse 9 of chapter 3. And we find ourselves at the summary, or the closing arguments, if you will, of his case. Let's read it.

Beginning in verse 9. What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous.

Not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There is no one who does good.

There is not even one. Their throat is an open grave. With their tongues they keep deceiving. 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 paths. And the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

[6 : 41] So what Paul has been trying to prove, and what Paul is trying to punctuate with this passage, with this series of quotations from the Old Testament, is the universal reality of mankind's depravity.

Okay? The universal reality of mankind's depravity. It's a universal truth. Everyone is included in this. No exceptions. Notice the repetition. It's used in the first couple of verses here.

The first three or so. You see the word none and not one used continuously. None righteous. None who understands. None who seeks for God. Not one of them. Everyone under sin.

So that enables us to understand this passage very easily. This is a very simple passage. It's very clear. There's not a lot of, you know, there's not more depth to it than you really see at face value.

It really does mean what it says. Nobody's righteous. There's nobody that is capable of being righteous outside of Christ. Everyone is under sin. So what does it mean to be under sin?

[7 : 42] Verse 9 says that, right? Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin. It's another way of saying depraved. It's a phrase that means depraved in the Bible. Sin, as we know, infects everyone.

But nobody has a problem with that. Everyone knows that everyone sins. Nobody thinks anybody's perfect. But there is a problem with the extent to which we are in sin.

The extent to which we are depraved. People have a lot of conversation about that. And the question kind of comes down to this. Are we naturally good people that sometimes commit sins?

Or are we naturally evil people that commit sin because it's who we are? That's the question. Are we naturally good? Or are we naturally bad?

Naturally righteous? Do some bad things. Naturally unrighteous? Only do bad things. The doctrine of total depravity would say that we are totally, totally incapable of doing anything but sin.

[8 : 48] Before Christ, hear me clearly on this, totally incapable of doing anything good in the eyes of God. That's important.

Unless Christ, by sweet grace, gives us the ability to do so. Gives us a new nature. Gives us a new heart.

Gives us new desires. Gives us new affections. That enables us to actually love God as we've been called to love Him. But apart from Christ intervening, we cannot glorify God.

We cannot do good. That is what depravity, the idea of that says. It also states that we are enemies of God. We're opposed to all that is good. We're haters of Christ. We're lovers of self and of pleasure.

Our God is our appetite. Whatever suits you. Our tendencies are continually toward evil and we know nothing of righteousness. Listen to this definition by this guy named Lorraine Bettner. [9 : 49] This is describing the doctrine of total depravity. This doctrine of total inability, which declares that men are dead in sin, does not mean that all men are equally bad, or that any man is as bad as he could be, nor that anyone is entirely destitute of virtue, nor that human nature is evil in itself, nor that man's spirit is inactive, and much less does it mean that the body is dead.

What it does mean is that since the fall, man rests under the curse of sin. That he is actuated by wrong principles, and that he is wholly unable to love God or do anything meriting salvation. His corruption is extensive, but not necessarily intensive. It is in this sense that man, since the fall, is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good.

He is an alien by birth, and he is a sinner by choice.

The inability under which he labors is not an inability to exercise volition, but an inability to exercise holy volitions. He cannot do good in the eyes of God.

[11 : 14] He can do good things. You can be philanthropic. You can do nice things for your neighbors. You can do good, virtuous things in life, but that does not credit or merit anything in the eyes of God.

There are a lot of good people, by secular standards, that are doing a lot of great things in this world. Bill Gates gives away 58% of all his wealth. That's a lot of money. But he's not a good person in the eyes of God if he doesn't know Christ.

And that's what it comes down to. Holiness. Do you have holiness? Do you have blamelessness? Do you have righteousness? And you can't get that outside of Jesus. And that's what it means to be depraved.

Is that biblical? Is that what our text says? Well, we'll let our passage speak for itself. I have three points. My first point is the character of the depraved.

The character. The character. Verses 10 through 12. He says, There is none righteous. Not even one. There is none who understands.

[12 : 20] There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one. Alright, next point.

Just kidding. No. There is none righteous. Okay? That is to say, There is nobody that is able to keep God's law.

Okay? Righteousness is defined by that. Perfect conformity to the law of God. That's what Christ did that we can't do. He was perfectly righteous. Perfectly obedient and submissive to all the Father asked of Him.

Perfectly obedient to all the commandments. That's what made Him different. Living a life in perfect conformity to the law of God is the only way that a man of himself can be made righteous.

And since nobody has ever done that or will ever do that, we are all unrighteous. We are all desperately wicked. Secondly, the passage says that no one understands. All of our eyes were once darkened.

[13 : 26] Okay? Some of you may still have this darkened eyesight. In Matthew 13, Jesus is describing the reason why He actually gives parables to certain people.

And He tells His disciples that seeing, they will not understand. They will not perceive. Hearing, they will not grasp it. And that's the state of the depraved man.

They hear, they understand, they take in truth, but they can't comprehend it. It doesn't make the sense that God intends the sense to be to them. Because of this darkening, we could not see the beauty of Christ.

His glory is unknown to us. The glory of the gospel is darkened. Our need for His blood is not felt. Turn to 2 Corinthians real quick.

2 Corinthians 4. Beginning in verse 3. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 3 says, There's a lot of people that make an intellectual assent to God.

[14 : 55] They say, yes, I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Yes, I believe in the things that the Bible says about God. But they have not been shown His glory. They have not been given the grace to submit to His will.

And therefore, the good things that they do, the good professions that they make, are still filled with unrighteousness. This is what we once were. This is what you are.

If you don't know Christ. This is the reality of being depraved. Thirdly, no one seeks. Nobody seeks.

You may say, surely that's not true. There are billions of seekers in the world. There's a billion plus seekers of all different kinds of religions. These people are all going for God.

They're all looking for God. They're all trying to figure out, how can I be a part of God's family? They want to go to heaven. How can you say they aren't seeking God?

[15:56] Because they are seeking Him for His benefits. They are not seeking Him for Him. That's the difference. The kind of seeking spoken of in our passage is as Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, to seek God means to desire God above everything and everybody.

To seek His glory. To be anxious to promote His glory. To seek God in the biblical sense means that God is the center of our thinking. And it is the supreme object of our lives to know Him and to love Him and to live for His glory.

The supreme object of our lives is to know Him and to live for His glory. That is a different kind of seeking.

There is seeking that goes on in this world. But people seek heaven for heaven. People seek forgiveness simply for the sake of forgiveness.

People seek God for His benefits. So they don't go to hell. Natural depraved men don't seek like Christ has called us to seek.

[17:04] No one seeks. Listen to the clear words of Jesus in John 15, 16. This is true of you. Listen to this. You did not choose me, but I chose you. 1 John 4, 19 says we love wine.

Because He first loved us. Christ sought you out. And the only kind of seeking that we can do is a responsive seeking. In light of what Christ has done for us.

In light of the initiation that He came and brought into our lives. That's why we can love Him. That's why we can cherish Him. That's why we can appreciate Him. That's why His Word is precious to us. That's why evangelism is important to us. That's why friendship. That's why the church. That's why the body of Christ is so treasured by us. It's because Christ has made those things precious to you. It wasn't natural. It's not natural. As a result of these three things described, we find in verse 12, the effect, which is uselessness and bad doing.

[18:11] All have turned aside, it says. Together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one. This is the effect of the character of the depraved.

Useless, bad doing. We're like sheep. Stupid. Dumb animals. Driven by our appetite. Straying away from the protection of the shepherd. Killed by sin like a sheep is by a wolf.

All we like sheep, the Scripture says of us in Isaiah 53, all we like sheep have gone astray.

Everyone has turned to his own way. Exclusions of no one.

Everyone has gone the wrong way. Away from the shepherd. Away from Christ. We're rebels. That's what we are. That's what we were.

That's what Christ has saved you from. Death. Sure death. And wrath. Because of sin we are spoiled. Useless to God.

[19:11] Like a broken cup that can hold no water. Like salt that has become tasteless. Those are descriptions in Scripture. Useless to God. Like a cup that is broken and can hold no water.

You can't drink from it. It's purposeless. That's what you are apart from Christ giving you purpose. Our depravity is so great. But our Savior is great too.

Secondly, my second point is the conversation of the depraved. First was the character. Second is the conversation. This is verses 13 and 14.

Their throat is an open grave. With their tongues they keep deceiving. The poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

It's really descriptive. It's clear again to see that Paul intends to expose the extent of our corruption. The extent of it. Every organ associated with our speaking is distinguished by Paul and then damned by Paul.

[20:16] Throat. Tongue. Lips. Mouth. I think it's also important to notice the direction of the organs. As they proceed out of the man's heart.

The direction of them. The throat is first. Then the tongue. The lips. And then the mouth. Everything proceeding in a direction from the heart.

Which is like Christ describes. Everything about your speaking. Everything about what comes out of your heart is corrupted. What's the point? Everything is corrupted.

What's he trying to make here? What's the point he's trying to make with this descriptive language? Everything is vile. There's not one redeemable part of man. He is completely spoiled.

Mankind is completely vitiated. Mankind is completely ruined. What was your speech like before Christ? Did you cuss?

[21 : 13] Did you use a lot of sarcasm? Did you make fun of people? Did you talk behind their back? Did you lie? Did you deceive? Did you flatter? Did you manipulate?

What great wickedness can you find in the tongue? Remember. Remember. One slip of the tongue. One little comment. One little white lie.

Had enough power of evil in it. To damn the whole human race to hell for all eternity. I'm referring to Satan's lie in the garden.

One lie. How many times have you lied? How many times have you cursed God? How many times have you forgotten Christ? How many times have you spoke sarcastically against a brother that's like a knife to his back?

How many times have you manipulated, flattered to get something for your own benefit? Every single one of those things was damnable to the entire human race. If that had been the only sin that had ever been committed, it would have been worthy of eternal damnation.

[22 : 16] And Christ saved you from that. Your speech is a great evidence of your depravity. Look at James 3 real quick.

Beginning in verses 5 and 6. James 3, 5. So also the tongue is a small part of the body. And yet it boasts of great things.

Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire. The very world of iniquity. The tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body.

And sets on fire the course of our life. And is set on fire by hell. So James points out for us that our tongues, apart from the sanctifying work of the Spirit, are hellish.

Are capable of great, great devastation. Christ came to die for every single word you have spoken. Your depravity is extensive.

[23 : 37] But our Savior is great. Lastly, the conduct of the depraved. The conduct of the depraved.

Verses 15-18. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their paths.

And the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. If you ever come across somebody who doubts the sovereignty of God in salvation.

God's sovereign election of man. Or somebody that doubts depravity. Somebody that doubts man's inability to save himself. Look no further than Judas.

Bring him to Judas. Three years he followed the fleshly Christ. Three years he saw his power to heal and raise dead people. To suppress natural disasters.

[24 : 37] Calming waves of the ocean, of the sea. Three years he saw him create food out of thin air from nothing. Three years he himself was sent on mission and witnessed miracles and salvations.

And what was the result? Betrayal? Murder? Judas' feet were swift to shed blood. You and I are one decision away from being Judas.

One decision. If God had not decided to save you, you would be Him. You would be headed towards the exact same place that He is in.

With the exact same condemnation. With the exact same hatred of God. In opposition to all that is godly. God's grace saved you.

You would be exactly the same. Do you feel that though? Do you feel the same carnal tendencies as Judas felt? He was driven and motivated by greed. Have you never been driven and motivated by greed before?

[25 : 57] Have you never felt or thought of exacting revenge on an enemy before? Have you never felt those feelings of restraint? Fathers, have you never considered what you would do to the perpetrator if one of your children were taken advantage of?

Husbands, have you never considered what you would do if your wife were assaulted? I have. Many times over. I would exact vengeance myself.

If I had the right to. I would take it into my own hands. To kill. To destroy. To ruin his family. For ruining my family. Those tendencies are all inside of every one of us.

Every one of us is just like Judas. Just one decision away from being exactly as he was. Tightly clenched fist. A gnarled brow.

Gritted teeth. We've all felt that hatred. The only thing holding you back is God's grace. But if removed for just a moment, you would kill. What happens when people...

[27 : 01] What happens when... What happened when Martin Luther King was killed? And assassinated? There was all kind of looting. Theft. I'm sure that a lot of those people would say, I never would steal like that.

I never would do that. But when pushed to the edge, when your fleshly nature is tempted to a certain degree, the human being is capable of anything.

We all have that inside of us. But God's grace has chosen to give you His Spirit. To suppress those desires. To kill sin.

To remove thoughts and feelings and tendencies of hatred. To give you an ability to respond in a humble and forgiving and Christ-exalting way.

To forgive those who don't deserve forgiveness. How many times did Christ say, Forgive your brother? Seven? No, seventy times seven. It's a way of saying, Forever.

[28 : 04] No matter what He does to you. Our own Savior was... What we know. And God allowed it for His glory.

You would destroy if you could. We make movies about it, don't we? We rejoice in the destruction of the wicked and the just killing of the merciless. We applaud it.

However, we fail to see that if it were not for the blood of our great Savior, we would be the objects of God's eternal justice and wrath. We are the merciless.

We are those who would never have known the path of peace had it not been for Christ. You are super depraved. So depraved.

So in need of a Savior. So broken. So far from what Christ intended for you to be.

[29 : 04] I wish I could paint an accurate picture for how far away from God you really are. So you could feel the distance. I hope and pray that through this word you feel a little bit of it. And are reminded of the grace that God has given to you.

Don't forget this. You fearless sinners have been made into reverential lovers of Jesus. Eternal worshippers of His grace. Or have you?

That's the question that I'm going to end with. Is have you? Have you been saved? Have you been washed? Have you been sanctified?

Are you being sanctified? Do you have an affection and a love for Jesus Christ that is like nothing you felt before? Do you see sin diminishing? Do you see your love for Jesus Christ growing?

Your love for the things that Christ loves growing? Your love for the church? Your hatred of sin? Your love of the saints? These are important questions to answer.

[30 : 12] This is the bad news. But it's necessary. We cannot worship God rightly apart from it. Vodibachum once said this. If I feel like I'm pretty good.

If I feel like I'm a pretty good person. I will never comprehend the depths of my own sin. And the depths of my need of Jesus Christ. If I feel that I'm a pretty good person.

I will never come to the place where I magnify Christ rightly. And worship and adore Him. In the way that He is to be worshipped and adored. Because I do not comprehend the vast magnitude of difference between Him and me.

It is only when I understand sin rightly. That I magnify and worship Christ appropriately. Let's pray. Father, I thank You for this opportunity to bring Your Word to Your people.

God, there's so much hidden in Scripture that we don't see. That we don't know. That we don't feel. Lord God, that if we did see it. And if we did feel it more. We would be able to more accurately and more fully worship You.

[31 : 23] God, I pray that You please just unveil for us more of the truth of the Gospel. The bad and the good. Help us to, Father, rejoice in You. As our Savior. As our Lord.

And, Father God, as our eternal lover. Of our souls. We are so unworthy of You, God. That the sin that we've committed is so vile. One sin plunged mankind into an eternal destiny.

Of wrath. Hellfire. Indignation. And yet, Lord God, by Your one sacrifice. You can save all of us.

You can wash all of our sins away. You can separate us from our sin as far as the east is from the west. You can give us freedom. And joy. And our relationship.

So please, Lord, help us just to remember the death. That we have died to sin. And the life that we now live to God. And let us live that life, Lord, with faith. And with joy. And with contentment.

[32 : 25] We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.