

## 33. The Book of Romans 3:10-18-Part 1

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### *Paul's Epistle to the Romans*

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(11-29-23)

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Tonight, we find ourselves entering into Romans 3:10-20 (primarily an introductory message tonight) which constitutes Paul's closing arguments in his case for the guilt of all human beings in the presence of Holy God.

As we have said repeatedly, in this first section of the book (1:18-3:20—a section referred to as “*Condemnation*”) Paul is presenting his argument that the whole world apart from Jesus Christ is lost in sin, separated from God, and condemned to hell.

With the precision of a brilliant prosecuting attorney, Paul sets out to systematically prove his case by first addressing:

- I. *The unrighteous heathen in 1:18-32.*
- II. *The self-righteous hypocrite (moralist) in 2:1-16.*
- III. *The ultra-religious Hebrews (the religionist) in 2:17-29*

In making his case he proves that the heathen is condemned by *creation*; the hypocrite by *conscience*; and the Hebrew by *commandment*. His conclusion is that everyone from the reprobate to the religionist (and everyone in between) are all guilty apart from Jesus and His payment for their sins on Calvary's Cross.

Now Paul calls the final Witness for the prosecution to the stand—God Himself!

Verses 10-18 amount to a 14-count indictment of the human race by God right out of His Word. It's important to understand, that this is God's view of man, and if anyone is harboring under any illusions or delusions of man's innate goodness—they'd better listen carefully to what God has to say about us and not hold to fallen mankind's view of itself.

Now, before we look at verses 10-18—let's look at verse 9:

#### **Romans 3:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.**

Paul has just gotten thru proving that there are definite advantages to being a Jew (v.1-8)—but he quickly adds that these blessings and benefits don't mean that ‘*we Jews*’ are better than the Gentiles (Greeks)—and it certainly doesn't mean that we are not sinners and exempt from God's judgment.

**“For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.”**

The word “**under**” is ‘*hupa*’ in the Greek and means “*to be under the power, the dominion, and the control of sin*” (i.e., our fallen sin nature as the word ‘sin’ is singular in the Greek)—that’s the idea.

*“Who is under the power and dominion and control of sin?”—all of us!—*

**1 John 5:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway [control]* of the wicked one.

It’s hard for a lot of people to come to terms with this truth—especially religious people.

They want to say, “*Yes, all but me because...I’m better than most people in that I go to church, pray, read the Bible, light candles, help out in the local food pantry...etc.*”

The Pharisees were the classic example of this kind of thinking—everyone else were sinners but not them!

*“You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?—And they cast him out.”* (John 9:34)

But the Pharisees weren’t the only ones who had a high opinion of their own moral superiority and goodness as compared with others—most of the human race is guilty of this thinking as well.

**1 John 1:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Now of course, most people wouldn’t claim that they *never* sin—but they would quickly add that they’re not that bad—in fact most people still see themselves as basically good.

This whole section is based on Paul’s assertion from Scripture that there are no good, moral, or righteous people in the world apart from Jesus Christ.

***“There is none righteous, no, not one...There is none who does good, no, not one.”*** (verse 10, 12)

This statement runs contrary to what most people think about themselves—that they are basically ‘good people.’

The Bible acknowledges this—“*Most men will proclaim each his own goodness...*” (Proverbs 20:6)

Back in 1981, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book entitled, “*When Bad Things Happen to Good People.*”

His book struck a chord with the public because it shot up to the top of the N.Y. Times bestseller list practically overnight and stayed there for over a year—and since it was first published has sold over 4 million copies. Apparently, a lot of people wrestle with this problem because they see themselves as ‘good’ people—so much so that when bad things happen to them they lash out at God for being unfair to them—“*I’m a good person, this shouldn’t be happening to me!*”

This forces people to conclude that either there is no God—or that He isn’t a good and loving God after all.

But there’s a third possibility which is the one the Bible sets forth—that a good, loving, all-powerful God created a good world for mankind to live in—a world free of sin, suffering, corruption, evil and death.

And He gave man a good thing called ‘free-will’ (because He didn’t want robots)—but it was man who exercised his free-will in rebellion against his Creator.

At that moment the Fall occurred, and sin entered the world through the sin of Adam and Eve—which was then passed to all human beings down through the centuries—up to and including the present day.

The result was the corruption of God’s good creation.

Some ask, “*Did God create evil?*”—and the answer to that is NO.

Evil is a corruption of what was created *good* (like rust and rot)—God didn’t create evil; evil came about thru man’s sin. However, God isn’t opposed to using the evil (and its ensuing consequences) to bring about His ultimate purposes (the redemption of sinners and the establishment of His Kingdom).

The bottom line is—God doesn’t *promote* evil—He permits evil. He permits what is bad to bring about what is good—the ultimate good of defeating evil and redeeming fallen sinners who come to Him by faith.

Look, if this world was all there is, then I would have to agree with Rabbi Kushner...

But the Bible tells us that this life is nothing more than a *prelude* to eternity—a *preparation* for what is to come:

**2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Job said, “*When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.*” (23:10)

You see, the real flaw in Rabbi Kushner’s book “*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*” is that it was based on a faulty premise—which will always lead to a faulty conclusion.

The faulty premise is that—there are good people in the world for bad things to happen to!

This is exactly opposite of what the Scriptures teach (Romans 3:10-12) and makes God the ‘bad guy.’ (Explain)

If your *theology* (understanding of God) is built on a faulty *anthropology* (your understanding of man) you are bound to come away with a distorted, twisted view of God.

And so, that brings us to the climax of this section (1:18-3:20) where Paul looks to the Word of God as the final and greatest testimony against mankind—and as I said a moment ago—it’s a 14-count indictment which begins with “**As it is written.**” (verse 10)

**Romans 3:10–18 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> **As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. <sup>12</sup> They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” <sup>13</sup> “Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit”; “The poison of asps is under their lips”; <sup>14</sup> “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” <sup>15</sup> “Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup> Destruction and misery are in their ways; <sup>17</sup> And the way of peace they have not known.” <sup>18</sup> “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”**

This is the most thorough and complete presentation on the depravity of man you’ll find anywhere in the Bible.

Of course it immediately begs the question—“*How can God love me if I’m this bad?*”

First of all, the passage isn't accusing every member of the human race of having committed all of these sins—it's teaching that the roots of all sin are in all of us. In some people they lie dormant—in others they come to full bloom and bear a lot of evil fruit. Look at what King David was capable of (adultery, murder), and he was called '*a man after God's own heart*'—where does that leave the rest of us?

It's important to understand that God doesn't love us because we're so good and lovable—God loves us because that's His nature.

In other words, He doesn't love us because of who we are but because of Who He is.

One author said,

*"The doctrine of total depravity doesn't hinder God's love—it magnifies it! It puts the focus on God Who could love such vile sinners like us and takes the focus off of man trying to earn God's love. Until we really see ourselves properly, we'll never really love and appreciate God properly. As long as we feel we're not so bad and have done a lot of good things which makes us worthy of God's love, we won't really appreciate God's love or His grace."*

Until you can say, like John Newton and mean it with all your heart, "*Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...*" you'll never be able to truly sing God's praises or relate to Him properly.

The problem with the Rabbi Kushners of this world, who think they're being mistreated by God and getting a bum deal is that—they think way too highly of themselves because they have an inflated view of self.

Let me read you a quote and then ask yourself if you agree with it or not—

*"If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue (and not a vice) to love myself since I am a human being too. There is no concept of man in which I myself am not included. A doctrine which proclaims such an exclusion proves itself to be intrinsically contradictory. The idea expressed in the biblical 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' implies that respect for one's own integrity and uniqueness, love for and understanding of one's own self, cannot be separated from respect for and love and understanding of another individual. The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self."*

That statement sounds like something you've heard a dozen times on Christian radio, TV—or something you've read in a Christian magazine or book. It comes out of Matthew 22:39 where Jesus commanded His followers—'*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*'

The author who wrote the quote I just read to you, interpreted Jesus' words to mean, "*We can't love our neighbor until we first learn to love ourselves.*"

However, that statement wasn't written by a Christian—and in fact, that interpretation of Matthew 22:39 didn't start with a person who loved God and was a Spirit-filled believer in Jesus Christ—it came from an atheist, psychoanalyst named Erich Fromm back in the 1940's.

Fromm tried to justify his humanistic view of self-love as biblical by saying that even Jesus taught that we can't really love anyone else until we first learn to love ourselves—therefore self-love is the '*greatest love of all.*'

But that's **not** what Jesus said at all—He didn't say, "*learn to love yourself before you can love others*" He said, "*love others as you already love yourself.*"

The devil has infiltrated the Church with this kind of thinking and corrupted it into embracing the demonic philosophy of 'self-love' which in turn has led to the rise of the 'self-esteem' movement that has captured the thinking and teaching of so many Christian leaders.

One well-known Christian motivational speaker echoes what many authors and speakers in the Christian community are telling people,

*"To build your self-image, make a list of your positive qualities on a card and keep it close at hand as a reference..."*

*Brag on yourself from time to time. Get in your own corner...*

*You should also set aside a few minutes each day for the sole purpose of deliberately looking yourself in the eye [in a mirror]. As you do this, repeat some positive affirmations of things you have done (use your victory list from step ten).*

*Then repeat many of the things other people have said to you or about you that were positive...*

*There are also cases where plastic surgery can be quite helpful in building a (positive) self-image. This is especially true in cases of an unusually large or long nose, protruding ears...grossly oversized or undersized breasts, etc."*

Another Christian counselor and psychologist counsels his patients:

*"Perhaps the most important key to the permanent enhancement of self-esteem is the practice of positive self-talk (we used to call it bragging). Every waking moment we must feed our self-image positive thoughts about ourselves and our performances, so relentlessly and vividly that our self-images are in time molded and modified to conform to new, higher standards."*

Well, Jesus talked about a man who had 'positive self-talk' down to a science—

#### **Luke 18:10–14 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' <sup>13</sup> And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The whole teaching on self-esteem goes against everything the N.T. tells us to do with self. The word "**esteem**" means—*"To regard highly; to value greatly, to have a high opinion of."* Therefore, *self-esteem* would then be—*"to regard self highly and to value self greatly, to have a high opinion of yourself."*

Self-esteem used to be called PRIDE and stands exactly opposite to what the Bible says we as Christians are to do with self—*"Deny yourself, crucify self, don't have a high opinion of self..."*

#### **Philippians 2:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> Let *nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Of course, the *building* of self-esteem would involve working on having a greater view of yourself and learning to love yourself more and more. Self-love rather than being a virtue is prophesied in the New Testament as one of the sinful qualities that will characterize the last days—

## 2 Timothy 3:1-2 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves...boasters, proud...

You see, self-love doesn't facilitate our love for others—it hinders it. The problem is we love ourselves so much we don't have time to love anyone else.

➤ *"Not everyone—there are a lot of people who hate themselves..."*

That's a lie—"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it..." (Ephesians 5:29)

Even the teenager who looks in the mirror and sees her face covered with acne and cries, "You're ugly, I hate you" doesn't really hate herself—How do I know that?

➤ When was the last time you were upset because someone you hated was ugly?

If you really hated yourself, you'd be glad you were ugly—which is why you're so upset with the way you look!

It's because you *do* love yourself—everybody does—"No one ever hated themselves." Actually, studies indicate that even criminals have very high (not low) self-esteem.

➤ Have you ever asked yourself why thieves steal? *"Well, obviously it's because they want what I have."*

Why do they want what you have?—"Because they're greedy?"

Yes, but at the core, their actions are being motivated by self-love.

So, they take what belongs to you because they believe that they are more deserving of possessing it than you are—why?

Because they love themselves more than anyone else.

That is why they have no guilt when they steal, and generally feel completely justified in doing so—it's because they're really not taking what belongs to *you*—they're taking *back* what rightly belongs to them—the material things you 'stole' from them (thru racism, injustice, white privilege etc.).

This teaching that we all must learn to love ourselves and esteem ourselves as Christians is perverting our concept of the cross of Christ and why Jesus died for us—as well as destroying our love for and gratitude toward God for what He has done for us.

## Luke 7:36–47 (NKJV)

<sup>36</sup> Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. <sup>37</sup> And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, <sup>38</sup> and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. <sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup> And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." <sup>41</sup> "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred

denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup> Simon answered and said, "I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." <sup>44</sup> Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. <sup>45</sup> You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. <sup>47</sup> Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little."

Implying that the more conscious we are of our unworthiness the more we will love Him for His grace and forgiveness He has bestowed on unworthy sinners such as us.

Our love and appreciation for God is directly proportionate to how little or how much we love ourselves. Paul's "*self-image*" seems to have deteriorated the closer he got to Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul describes himself as the "*least of the apostles*."

Later in his life he says that he is the "*least of all the saints*" (Ephesians 3:8).

Near the end of his life, Paul's self-assessment was that he was "*chief of sinners*" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Paul understood the key to his relationship with God was an increasing love for Christ and an increasing disregard for himself.

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