

34. The Book of Romans 3:10-18-Part 2

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(12-6-23)

Find this weeks' Study Audio & Video [Here](#)

Tonight, we find ourselves in Romans 3:10-18 which constitutes Paul's closing arguments in his case for the guilt of all human beings in the presence of Almighty God.

As we have said repeatedly, in this first section of the book Paul is making his case that the whole world apart from Jesus Christ and His payment for their sins on Calvary's Cross is condemned to spend eternity apart from God in hell. 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. 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.

As I said a moment ago—it's a 14-count indictment which begins with **"As it is written." (verse 10)**

Now, before we get into this entire section (verses 10-18)—let me read the first few verses and use them to review what we brought up last time—and as an introduction to tonight's study.

Romans 3:10–12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."*

It's hard for a lot of people to come to terms with this truth—especially moral and/or religious people who typically have a high view of themselves and their own goodness. So, it's hard for them to accept what God is saying about them that—they're not good people on their way to heaven—they are fallen sinners destined for hell—no matter how moral or religious they are!

In fact, this section in Romans 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?"*

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. Yet, in the last 50 or 60 years a very serious error has infiltrated the Church and is doing incredible damage to our concept of our fallen selves.

A teaching that rather than tearing down our opinion of ourselves, so that we might humble ourselves in the sight of God so He might lift us up by saving us and adopting us into His family and Kingdom—it seeks to build up our opinion of ourselves.

It all started with an atheist, psychoanalyst named Erich Fromm back in the 1940's who twisted Jesus' words in Matthew 22:39, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" to mean, "You can't love your neighbor until you first learn to love yourself."

Therefore, Fromm taught that self-love was 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.

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. (see Luke 7:36–47)

Our love and appreciation for God is directly proportionate to how little or how much we love and esteem ourselves. The whole teaching of self-esteem goes against everything the New Testament 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, esteem others better than yourself...etc."

For 350 years the Church has sung John Newton's classic hymn *Amazing Grace* which begins with the words, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me..."

Today however, the Church is singing a new song—"Amazing me how sweet I am that caused God to save a lovable, valuable and worthy person such as me!"

Spurgeon said it well:

"Jesus...did not come to save us because we were worth saving, but because we were utterly worthless, ruined, and undone...[nor] out of any reason that was in us, but solely and only because of reasons which He took from the depths of His own divine love. In due time He died for those whom He describes...as ungodly, applying to them as hopeless an adjective as He could."

Tozer likewise wrote,

"Until we believe that we are as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down."

Yet many professing Christians have the opposite take on this. Consider the following from Robert Schuller's book 'Self-Esteem: The New Reformation'—

"I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence, counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than...attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition. To be born again...we must be changed from a negative to a positive self-image—from inferiority to self-esteem... If Christianity is to succeed...it must cease to be a negative religion and must become positive. The classical error of historical Christianity is that we have never started with the value of the person. Rather, we have started from the 'unworthiness of the sinner'..."

The death of Christ on the cross is God's price tag on a human soul...[it means] we really are somebody's!...

Jesus didn't die for 'somebody's'—He died for sinners.

In that book Schuller tells us exactly what he means when he said that the cross was God's price tag on the worth of human beings—

"You only pay what something is worth. If a car is worth \$500 dollars you don't pay \$5000 for it. Therefore, the fact that God was willing to pay for our salvation with the blood of His Son means we are really worth a lot—that we are really somebodies (thumbs under the suspenders as we brag on ourselves)!"

And yet Schuller wasn't finished—I'll end with this quote from him—

"Jesus knew His worth, His success fed His self-esteem, He suffered the cross to sanctify His self-esteem. And He bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem...the cross sanctifies the ego trip." [The words, "get thee behind me Satan" come to mind!]

William Law wrote two centuries ago—

"Men are dead to God because they are living to Self. Self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking are the essence and the life of pride; and the Devil, the father of pride, is never absent from these passions, nor without an influence in them. Without a death to self, there is no escape from Satan's power over us..."

And yet Tozer said this—

"Self is one of the toughest plants that grows in the garden of life. It is, in fact, indestructible by any human means. Just when we are sure it is dead—it turns up somewhere else as robust as ever to trouble our peace and poison the fruit of our lives."

At the heart of all of man's problems is not low self-esteem but high self-esteem otherwise known as PRIDE! It manifests itself as selfishness, self-centeredness and the idea that we know, better than God, what's best for our lives.

The result is sin and suffering—as we see our world being destroyed, not from low self-worth but from self-love and self-worship run amuck. The Bible says clearly that you and I are responsible for the choices that we make in life and no one else—we have a free will, and we can exercise it to obey or to disobey what God has said.

Man is not an innocent victim inflicted with the disease of low self-esteem which causes him to act wrongly, corruptly and even violently.

His problem is rebellion against God fueled by pride and selfishness, and he doesn't need years of psychotherapy and recovery—he needs to repent and get his life right with God and to start being Christ-centered, esteeming others more important than himself.

C.S. Lewis said, *"We're not just imperfect people who need growth, but we're rebels who need to lay down our arms."*

This world is not full of good people that God is treating badly—it's full of bad people that God is treating kindly. The real question that mankind should contemplate isn't *"Why do bad things happen to good people"* but *"Why do good things happen to bad people."* (God could have walked away from us and let us die in our sins...)

Now with that as background, we want to look at verses 10-18 of Romans 3 where Paul is quoting right out of the Old Testament to prove what God thinks of man—and far from singing our praises as wonderful creatures

who are worthy of His love and therefore heaven bound, good people who need to brag on ourselves more for being so great.

No, instead God brings a 14-count indictment against the human race for its depravity. Again, this section constitutes the climax and closing arguments in Paul's case against mankind.

Romans 3:10–18 (NKJV)

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

This 14-count indictment is directed at 3 primary areas of man's person—his:

- I. Character (verses 10-12)
- II. Conversation (verses 13-14)
- III. Conduct (verses 15-18)

I. Character

A. (Indictment #1) "There is none righteous, no, not one"—verse 10

Paul starts by quoting from Psalm 14—which begins with the words, **"The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.' "** (verse 1)

The words *"there is"* are in italics meaning they were added by the translators for 'clarity' (but sometimes they don't clarify but only cloud and even confuse the meaning of what God is saying). Therefore, Psalm 14:1 actually says—*"The fool hath said in his heart, 'No, God!' "* This is probably more a statement of defiant rebellion than one of unbelief and atheism.

"None righteous" (verse 10)

Paul is using the term **'righteous'** in the sense of a person being *'right with God'*—or in other words, no human being apart from Jesus Christ is righteous or *'right with God.'* Yet, even the most evil people do, on occasion, some good things.

But Paul isn't speaking here about people doing *'right things'* from time to time outwardly—he's talking about man's character inwardly. He is saying that man's character at its core is corrupt because his nature is fallen from God's original creation which was—perfect, righteous, and just—to who we all are now—

Matthew 15:18–20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

So, the term **‘righteousness’** as used here by Paul doesn’t refer to *‘doing’* but to *‘being’*—it’s a term that doesn’t speak of what you *do* but of what you are.

Please understand, there are only 2 choices, 2 categories that every person falls into—good or bad—righteous or unrighteous—that’s it! There aren’t any in-between levels or categories for a person to fit themselves into—they’re either perfect or imperfect—good or bad! This is something that Jesus made abundantly clear in Matthew 19:16-17:

Matthew 19:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” ¹⁷ So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God...”

Jesus was saying one of two things here—either He was saying:

1. *“Why are you calling Me good, there is no one good but God? So, don’t call Me good I’m not God.”*

Or He was saying:

2. *“Why are you calling Me good, there is no one good but God? Do you recognize that I am God?”*

If Jesus is only one of many religious teachers in history—then His words carry no more weight than the teachings of Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed or anyone else.

So many people want to acknowledge that Jesus was a good man, a moral man and a great teacher but stop short of believing that He is God. Believing that Jesus is God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity is absolutely essential for salvation—

John 8:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

You’ll notice that the word “He” in verse 24 is in italics—which means it’s not there in the Greek but was added by the translators in an effort to help us to understand what Jesus was talking about.

What Jesus really said was, *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins [go to hell]...if you do not believe that I am—you will die in your sins.”*

One of the essential doctrines that a person must believe if they are going to be forgiven of their sins and go to heaven is that Jesus is Jehovah God (or ‘Yahweh’)—the great I AM!

But getting back to Jesus’ response to this ‘good’ man in Matthew 19—notice what the Lord tells him, which is critical to our understanding of this topic of ‘good’ people going to heaven.

Jesus said to him that—*“no one is good but God.”* Notice Jesus didn’t say that no one is as good as God—He said no one is good but God. You see the Bible defines goodness as ‘moral perfection’—and only God is morally perfect.

Most people will say, *“I know I’m not perfect, but I think I’m good enough to get into heaven.”*

But God is telling us in His Word that if you're not *perfect* you're not good enough—and no human being is perfect—

Romans 3:10, 12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ As it is written: "*There is none righteous, no, not one...*" ¹² *...There is none who does good, no, not one.*"

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (sinless perfection)

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death (eternal death—hell)...

You see, the bad news is that God only lets perfect people into heaven—the good news is that anyone who receives Jesus into their heart as Savior is pronounced perfect by God (because I am now in Christ and God no longer sees me, He sees only Jesus) and given the gift of eternal life in heaven—

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This world is not full of good people that God is treating badly—it's full of bad people that God is treating kindly.

As already mentioned, relative to other human beings, some people are obviously better *behaved* than others—but that doesn't make them '*good*' (morally perfect) as Jesus was the only human being to be truly good—because He's truly God!

Let me say that this is without a doubt the deadliest lie the devil has ever fed the human race—that heaven is only for '*good*' people. In other words, for people who have gone to church their whole lives and have lived virtuous, moral lives—in other words, heaven is only for those who 'deserve' to be there.

Let me stop here and lay a bombshell revelation on you—heaven is only for good people! Heaven is a place only *good* people will be allowed to enter into! The problem is that most people define *goodness* from fallen man's perspective and not from Holy God's perspective.

Most people come to the conclusion that they are good people and therefore worthy of heaven— by looking at *others* in society.

Of course, they can always find people who are worse than they are to compare themselves to—thieves, rapists, murderers and other assorted miscreants and malcontents—which makes them look like Mother Teresa by comparison—shining examples of virtue and worthiness.

But again, the Bible defines goodness as '*moral perfection*'—in other words, a person who is not as good as God is not acceptable to God—i.e., won't be allowed to live with Him in heaven forever.

➤ At this point many people will respond to this—"*How does God expect me to be as good as Him?*"

He doesn't—that's the whole point! He expects you to put your faith in His Son and He will place you in Jesus so that He only sees Jesus' perfection!

Pastor and evangelist Greg Laurie said this in a recent blog I read—

“Conventional wisdom says that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. But here’s something that may surprise you. There are going to be some “good” people who will not make it to heaven, because no one is good enough to get there on their own. And there are some “bad” people who will be in heaven because they realized they were bad, and they called out to God for forgiveness. Heaven isn’t for good people; heaven is for forgiven people. You must say, “God I’m sorry for my sin,” and turn from it. Your life can be changed by Jesus Christ. He is alive. He is standing at the door of your life and knocking. And he is saying that if you will hear his voice and open the door, he will come in. No matter what you have done, don’t despair. God will forgive you of any sin you have committed – if you will ask him for his forgiveness.”

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

Reach out to us [here](#).