

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

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

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(12-13-23)

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

Verses 10-18 amount to a 14-count indictment of the human race taken right out of the mouth of God (Paul quotes Scripture) 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 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—verses 10-12

##### Indictment #1

##### A. "There is none righteous, no, not one"—v. 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).

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* (the heart).

He is saying that man’s character at its core is corrupt because his nature is fallen from God’s original creation. The Bible says that God originally made Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden—but when they ate the forbidden fruit, the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—they fell.

What they fell from was sinless perfection and as such their fellowship with God was broken. From then to now—every person born into the world is born of Adam—a sinner that has been cursed and condemned by God to spend eternity in hell.

Most people comfort themselves with the knowledge that God is love, and surely a God of love won’t send anyone to hell except the worst people in the world—Hamas and other terrorists, mass murderers etc. Yet Mark tells us that when Jesus looked at the rich young ruler, this moral and sincere seeker He loved him (Mark 10:21) and yet His love couldn’t save him, and I assume that he died in his sins and went to hell.

As we have said—God’s love can’t save us, God’s love has never saved anyone—all it can do is provide a way by which we can be saved—

#### **John 3:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The New Testament tells us that it isn’t by love that God saves us—it’s by grace made available thru faith:

#### **Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God.

Now, when you understand all of this—you realize that Jesus didn’t come to help good people be better (good enough to make it into heaven)—He came to save condemned sinners from hell. So, the term **‘righteousness’** as used here by Paul in verse 10 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.

As we said last time, there are only 2 categories that every person falls into—good or bad—righteous or unrighteous—saved or unsaved—that’s it!

### **Indictment #2**

#### **B. “There is none who understands”—verse 11a**

Here Paul is quoting from Psalm 14:2 and is telling us that—not only is man *evil*, he’s also ignorant. In other words, he’s blind to his true standing before God!

**Romans 1:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

**Ephesians 4:18 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

At this point, all the ‘good folks’ out there would no doubt shout back—*“I don’t care what it says here, I am NOT evil!”*

In this section Paul isn’t dealing with man’s opinion and feelings about him or herself—this is all about what God has said in His Word about mankind.

**Jeremiah 17:9–10a (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? <sup>10</sup> I, the Lord, search the heart, / test the mind...

So, God said that, not only is man bad—but in his fallen state he doesn’t even understand what good is.

One pastor put it this way—

*“It’s like a pig that has lived its whole life in the mudhole—it’s all it knows, it’s the pig’s whole world and only frame of reference, it’s never seen or experienced what it means to be clean—the concept is meaningless to it.*

*And the same is true with unbelievers who have been born into and have lived their whole life in the mudhole of sin—they have no concept of what it means to be clean in God’s eyes and as such they define ‘goodness’ as simply not being as dirty as someone else.”*

But to say it one more time—fallen men and women are blind to their own depravity.

It’s kind of like the story I heard about 2 neighbor ladies talking to each other over the fence and the one says to the other—*“I don’t know what this world’s coming too!” “What do you mean”, said her neighbor. The woman replied, “Last night somebody broke into my house and stole all my Holiday Inn towels!”*

It’s amazing how bad my sins look when you’re committing them!

**Indictment #3****C. “There is none who seeks after God”—verse 11b**

Once again, Paul is quoting from Psalm 14:2.

To many, this statement seems ludicrous—I mean they would immediately come back with:

- *“No one seeks after God?! What about the person in the Philippines who cuts himself and whips his body at Easter time walking barefoot down a road of jagged rocks and then undergoes a mock crucifixion—how can you say he’s not seeking after God! Or what about the Tibetan monk who lives his entire life in simplicity and celibacy, meditating and fasting constantly—surely, he is seeking after God!”*

Look, all I can tell you is that Paul (quoting Scripture) says ‘none seeks after God.’

- *“So, then what is the man who whips himself in the Philippines at Easter time and then undergoes a mock crucifixion—if he’s not seeking after God—what is he seeking?”*

I don’t know, perhaps he’s seeking alleviation from his guilt, or recognition from his peers, or maybe he’s trying to gain favor with God so that he might earn a place in heaven—I don’t know what his motives are, all I know is that the Bible says he’s not seeking God!

- *“What about the monks in Tibet? What are they seeking?”*

Again, I don’t know what’s going on in their hearts—maybe they’re seeking peace, or perhaps they’re seeking some kind of transcendent emotional experience, or maybe they’re seeking a higher level of consciousness—all I know is God’s Word is telling us they’re not seeking after God!

Let’s set the record straight—**the Bible is clear that God can’t be found by our human efforts anyway.**

Many centuries ago Job asked the rhetorical question—*“Can a man by searching find God?”* → And the answer of course is—NO!

The Bible says that God is Spirit—spirits can interact with those in the physical realm—whereas man is locked or trapped in the physical realm.

No matter how sincere a person is and how hard they try, they are incapable of reaching beyond the boundaries of the physical, natural realm they find themselves trapped in—and therefore are incapable of knowing or understanding anything about the *supernatural* God.

**God has to reveal Himself to us**—we can’t by searching find Him!

As one pastor said,

*“We can’t expect the bug in the bottle to understand the little boy that put it there anymore than we can expect the natural man with his natural capacities to understand the supernatural God—unless that God chose to condescend and reveal Himself to man.”*

Of course, God did this by giving to us ‘special revelation’ (the Bible).

In just a few days we will celebrate the greatest ‘special revelation’ God has ever given the human race—the incarnation—where the Word became flesh and dwelt among us! (Christmas)

Listen, religion is all about seeking self-fulfillment and not about seeking God.

- At this point many would say, *“But I did seek God, that’s how I became a Christian!”*

**Luke 15:1–7 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup> So He spoke this parable to them, saying: <sup>4</sup> “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ <sup>7</sup> I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who goes out searching for lost sheep—

**Luke 19:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

**Indictment #4**

**D. “They have all turned aside [gone out of the way]”—verse 12a (Psalm 14:3)**

In other words, *they have all turned from the right way and gone astray*. Fallen man turned from God and His truth to follow his or her fallen inclinations and in the process made a wrong turn into sin, rebellion, and depravity.

**Isaiah 53:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, everyone, to his own way...

**Jeremiah 10:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> O Lord, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

**Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.

**Indictment #5**

**E. “They have together become unprofitable”—verse 12b (Psalm 14:3)**

The Greek word for ‘**unprofitable**’ is a word that’s often used for milk that has become sour and rancid, or for fruit that has become rotten—in other words, ‘*good for nothing!*’

Paul said in Romans 7:18 “*For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) there dwells nothing good.*”

Apart from Jesus, we have nothing to offer God of any value—there is nothing God can salvage from our fallen nature (our flesh) to use for His glory—His only command concerning our flesh is to crucify it!

**Indictment #6**

**F. “There is none who does good, no, not one”—verse 12c (Psalm 14:3)**

➤ “*What is the Bible talking about because that statement is ridiculous—a lot of people do good things.*”

**Isaiah 64:6 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds [as fallen human beings], they are nothing but filthy rags [in the eyes of God]...

The word ‘**good**’ is the Greek word *Chrēstotēs* and speaks of moral goodness that comes from a pure and holy heart—something a fallen human being does not have: “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*” (Jeremiah 17:9)

**Matthew 5:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

One author said,

*"If the sun was a heart then the sunshine that radiates from the sun would be the good we're talking about. Sunshine can't come from darkness anymore than true goodness can come from a corrupt fallen heart polluted by sin."*

God sees all actions within the context of the heart—is a heart saved or fallen, good or sinful?

➔ Listen: Illustration of a man who robs a bank. Was it a legitimate act of goodness?

**II. Conversation—verses 13-14****Indictment #7****A. "Their throat is an open tomb (grave)..."—verse 13a (Psalm 5:9)**

It's interesting that after describing what we are (character)—the first place Paul goes as an indicator of what's inside a person heart is what comes out of their mouth—

**Matthew 12:33–34 (NKJV)**

<sup>33</sup> "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. <sup>34</sup> Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

**Luke 6:45 (NKJV)**

<sup>45</sup> A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

**Matthew 15:18–19 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

Of course, the classic passage on the tongue is James 3:1-12:

**James 3:1–12 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. <sup>3</sup> Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. <sup>4</sup> Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. <sup>5</sup> Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. <sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men,

who have been made in the similitude of God.<sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.<sup>11</sup> Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

Nothing reveals more of what's in a person's heart than what comes out of their mouth.

#### **"Their throat is an open tomb" (verse 13a)**

God is saying in His word (Psalm 5:9) that the throat is to the heart what an open grave is to the corpse within it. In other words, the heart of sinful, fallen man is like a rotting corpse and it is thru his throat that the stench comes forth in his words.

One writer—

*"Tombs were sealed not only to show respect for the deceased, but to hide the sight and stench of the body's decay. As an unsealed tomb allows those who pass to see and smell what is inside, the unregenerate man's open throat—that is, the foul words that come from it—reveal the decay of his heart."*

You only have to listen a little bit to the conversations of unbelievers (the unredeemed) to hear them testify to this themselves.

#### **Indictment #8**

##### **B. "With their tongues they have practiced deceit"—verse 13b (Psalm 36:1-3)**

One pastor illuminates this—

*"With their tongues they keep deceiving" [which comes from a Greek word] that has the basic meaning of luring and was used of baiting a hook by covering it with a small piece of food to disguise its danger. When a fish bites the food, thinking he will get a meal, he instead becomes a meal for the fisherman. The imperfect Greek tense of the verb indicates continual, repetitive deceit. For the natural man, lying and other forms of deceit are a habitual and normal part of his life."*

#### **Psalm 52:2–4 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. <sup>3</sup> You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. <sup>4</sup> You love all devouring words, *You* deceitful tongue.

#### **Proverbs 6:16–19 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> These six *things* the Lord hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: <sup>17</sup> A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup> A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, <sup>19</sup> A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

#### **John 8:44 (NKJV)**

<sup>44</sup> You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.

#### **Indictment #9**

##### **C. "The poison of asps is under their lips"—verse 13c (Psalm 140:3)**

One writer says,

*“The fangs of such a deadly snake ordinarily lie folded back in the upper jaw, but when the snake throws his head to strike, these hollow fangs drop down, and when the snake bites, the fangs press a sac of deadly poison hidden under the lips, ejecting venom into the victim.”*

Jesus referred to the Pharisees as *“brood of vipers.”*

#### **Indictment #10**

#### **D. “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”—verse 14 (Psalm 10:7)**

**“Cursing”** comes from a Greek word that means *“to speak evil against someone; to publicly desire the worst for someone thru open criticism and defamation.”*

**“Bitterness”** means to *“openly express emotional hostility against an enemy.”*

The interesting thing when it comes to slander, gossip, cursing, and bitterness being likened to snake’s venom is that—the poison of many snakes contains neurotoxins that render the victim paralyzed and unable to fight back to defend themselves.

The curses and bitter words towards another spoken against them in their absence like venom—renders them helpless to defend themselves against it and in the process kills their character.

#### **Psalm 64:3–4 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows—bitter words, <sup>4</sup> That they may shoot in secret at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear.

One author said,

*“You have a tongue that you can use to ruin the reputation of someone else. You can ruin the fair name of some woman. You can ruin the reputation of some man. I think today the most vicious thing in some of our churches is the gossip that is carried on.”*

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