

God Still Does Not Play Favorites (3:9)

^{3:9}What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin...

- "...there is no partiality with God" (2:11). Paul has argued throughout chapter two that the Jewish people need the Gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation as much as non-Jewish people. God does not play favorites. The Jewish people enjoyed benefits throughout history, though, including the fact that "they were entrusted with the oracles of God" (3:2). Having the Scripture wasn't enough. "It is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified" (2:13). We find out in today's text that no one meets this criterion for justification (being declared right before God).
- Paul's "we" here in 3:9 is probably the Jewish people.¹
- Apart from justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone, we are "all under sin." Sin is defined by God in His Word alone. Sin reigns (5:21; 6:12), enslaves (6:6), is a master (6:14). We are either slaves to it (6:16,17,20) or freed from it in Christ (6:18,22). There is no middle ground.

The Bible's Evidence Against Us (3:10-18)

The Source of Evidence

^{3:10a}...as it is written...

- As the apostle closes out the large section from 1:18-3:20, he ends with the final proof that everyone needs the Gospel. What is it? Scripture. He ends with six quotes from the Old Testament (five from the Psalms, one from Isaiah).

¹ For Paul's thorough self-identification as a Jew and yet a sinner who needs the justification that comes by faith in Jesus Christ alone, **READ Philippians 3:1-21** (which, along with Galatians 3 and Hebrews 12, you should be reading every week anyway). The Jews are not exempt from punishment for their sin (Amos 3:2).

- Notice that, even though quoting from the Psalms and Isaiah, Paul summarizes these passages with the title "Law" (usually reserved for the Ten Commandments or the first five books of the O.T., the books of Moses). We are reminded that "the Old Testament in its entirety is permeated with the requirements and judgments which are summed up in the ten commandments."²

Morally, Intellectually, and Willfully Sinful: Evidence from Psalm 14:1-3//51:1-3

^{3:10b} "There is none righteous, not even one;

^{3:11} There is none who understands,
There is none who seeks for God;

^{3:12} All have turned aside, together they have become useless;
There is none who does good,
There is not even one."

- We are morally lost in sin: "There is none righteous, not even one..."
 - The opening condemnation, "there is none righteous, not even one" (3:10b) prepares us for 3:20, where we are told "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight." Though they look different in English, the words "righteous" (δικαιος) and "justified" (δικαιωω) are related in the original Greek. To be "justified" is to be declared "righteous" before God's throne of judgment. Nobody passes this standard.
 - Solomon also gives us a similar condemnation: "...there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

² John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 106.

- We are intellectually lost in sin: *"There is none who understands..."*
 - Remember how this section (1:18-3:20) began. God is wrathful against *"men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"* (1:18). *"Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools"* (1:21,22).
 - Lost humanity's intellect is twisted and darkened because the first principle (there is a God Who made all things and has made demands of humanity) is denied, and the goal of all knowledge is denied (to know God and glorify Him through obedience and worship), as well.
- Our wills are captive to sin: *"There is none who seeks for God..."* Our wills cannot choose God.³ Those in opposition to the truth of God are in *"the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will"* (2 Timothy 2:26).
- The result of our moral, intellectual, and willful lostness to sin (3:11) is described in 3:12.
 - *"All have turned aside..."* Praise the Lord for Jesus! Isaiah confessed this: *"All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him"* (53:6).
 - Doing good is helpfully defined in a parallel given to us by the apostle John: *"...we keep His commandments and do the things that are*

pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22). The only thing that pleases God (which is good) is that which is in conformity with His commandments. The lost do not want to obey God's commandments, and even if they do the things commanded by God, it is not because God commanded them and not for His glory.

- Apart from Christ, no one is exempt from this condemnation. No one. All need the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be saved.

Sinful in Speech: Three Evidences

- In Romans 1:29,30, the apostle described the speech of those who suppress the truth about God and refuse to give Him glory or thanks: they are *"gossips, slanderers"* who give *"heartily approval"* to those who oppose *"the ordinance of God."* Now he returns to the theme of fallen man's speech, but now builds his case upon the testimony of Scripture.

Evidence from Psalm 5:9

3:13a *"Their throat is an open grave,
With their tongues they keep deceiving,"*

- We've been studying Proverbs during our Lord's Day evening service after prayer. The symbolic figure of the temptress (the strange woman who leads away from covenant with God) offers attractive things to those whom she tempts, but the wisdom of Proverbs says that her words lead the foolish to "Sheol," or the grave (5:5; 7:27; 9:18).⁴

⁴ The Contemporary English Version renders "Sheol" as "the world of the dead," the King James Version as "hell." Michael V. Fox, in his *Proverbs 1-9* (Yale University Press, 2000), translates it as "death land." It is the place where the penalty of Genesis 2:17 is eternally realized, separate from the God Who is the Source of true life (and love, joy, peace, blessing, and relationship).

³ This is why Jesus said, *"no one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him...no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father"* (John 6:44,65).

- The apostle James says about our speech, “*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*” (James 2:6).

Evidence from Psalm 140:3

3:13b “*The poison of asps is under their lips*”;

Evidence from Psalm 10:7

3:14 “*Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*”;

Sinful in Behavior: Evidence from Isaiah 59:7,8

3:15 “*Their feet are swift to shed blood,*
3:16 *Destruction and misery are in their paths,*
3:17 *And the path of peace they have not known.*”

- Lost human beings are not at peace with God, not at peace with each other, and not at peace with themselves.
- It is the result of sin, and this result is ordained of God: “*What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted...consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent?*” (Ecclesiastes 1:15; 7:12).

Sinful at the Root: Evidence from Psalm 36:1

3:18 “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*”

- “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding*” (Proverbs 9:10). Without “*the fear of the LORD,*” there is no “*beginning*” of either “*wisdom*” or “*understanding.*”
- This is what is at the heart of the problem of humanity.⁵

⁵ Proverbs also teaches that “*the fear of the LORD is to hate evil*” (8:13). The “*fear of the Lord*” is a common New Testament theme (Matthew 10:28//Luke 12:5; Luke 1:50; Acts 9:31; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:12,13; 1 Peter 2:17;

Doctrine

- The apostle Paul, from these Old Testament texts, builds a case for the doctrine of the total depravity of man.⁶ The total depravity of man means that we are incapable of pleasing God in our natural state, and cannot glorify Him (or give Him thanks) or be in right relationship with Him. This doctrine stands in opposition to the confession of the world that all human beings are either good from the beginning or good in their hearts. The Bible teaches just the opposite.
- Apart from Christ, we are “*helpless*” (Romans 5:6), “*sinners*” (5:8), “*enemies*” of God (5:10), “*dead in [our] trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1), “*sons of disobedience*” (2:2), and “*by nature children of*

Revelation 14:7; 15:4; 19:5). Important Old Testament passages on this topic include Psalm 128:1; Isaiah 51:12,13.

⁶ “Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, III). “Our first parents, by this sin [eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root, and by God’s appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgression” (1689 Baptist Confession, 6.2-4).

wrath" (2:3). We were "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (2:12). We were citizens of "the domain of darkness" (Colossians 1:13).

- Most people believe people are basically good (sadly some Christians, against the Bible, believe this, as well). Many Christians will argue that lost humanity is spiritually sick, but has hope of being treated and recovered. The Bible teaches that humanity is absolutely spiritually dead in its sin, and only rebirth or new life will save.
- The Bible doesn't teach this doctrine to be unnecessarily negative, but to openly and honestly diagnose the illness that will eternally separate us from God. It is the required and indispensable prelude to the Good News, the Gospel, and there can be no salvation apart from it being made known to the lost person.

The Point Paul's Trying to Make (3:19,20)

God's Law Shuts Your Mouth (3:19)

3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God...

- God's condemnation under the Law is not the final goal, but we must first be condemned under His judgment before we can be led to Christ: "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:23,24). No one who has not been condemned by the Law can come to faith in Jesus Christ – they do not know why they need to be saved!
- "So that every mouth may be closed..." We know that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Death approaches for all,

and therefore judgment before the God Who sees and knows all approaches for all. What if, in that inevitable moment, God were to ask, "why should I let you into My heaven of eternal bliss?" We find here, taught by the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that God's Law causes "every mouth" to "be closed" when that question is asked. I could shut your mouth just going down the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17//Deuteronomy 5:1-21), not to mention the Greatest Commandment (Deuteronomy 6:5) and Second-Greatest Commandment (Leviticus 19:18). You have violated God's Law, and have therefore fallen short of His perfect glory. You cannot enter the eternal place of His glory if you fall short of His glory.

- "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), a violation of God's Law. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- **I pray your mouth is shut** to any attempt to claim a right to God's heaven through anything found in your or your actions.

What God's Law Can and Cannot Do (3:20)

3:20...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

- Paul will further explain the Law's role as a teacher concerning sin later on in this same letter. He says, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said [in Exodus 20:17// Deuteronomy 5:21], 'You shall not covet'" (7:7).

"...let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

Acts 13:38,39