

Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God

(75)

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

Romans 1:18-3:20

(Continuation from 08/20/17)

F. God's Case Against All Men, Romans 3:9-20

Romans 3:10-12 (NASB)¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

The apostle Paul was well aware of man's disposition to deny his sin. Therefore, from creation, from history; from reason and logic, and from conscience, Paul has already presented powerful testimony of man's sinfulness. Now he presents the ultimate testimony, the testimony of Scripture. Beginning with verse 10 and continuing through verse 18, Paul introduces before the court, as it were, the testimony of God's own Word as revealed in the Old Testament.

Verses 9-20 summarize God's divine and perfect view of man and they continue in a trial motif: the arraignment (v. 9), the indictment (vv. 10-17), the motive (v. 18), and the verdict (vv. 19-20).

1. **The charge: all men are under sin (v.9).**
2. **The case of a sinful nature (v.10-12).**
3. **The case of a sinful tongue (v.13-14).**
4. **The case of sinful acts (v.15-18).**
5. **The case of the law (v.19-20).**

2. (Romans 3:10-12) Man, Nature— Sin: there is the case of a sinful nature.

Romans 3:10-12 (NASB)¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

The Indictment

Romans 3:10-17 (NASB)

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

¹⁰ as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR
GOD;
¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”
¹³ “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY
KEEP DECEIVING,” “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 PATHS,
¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”

Paul now presents an appalling thirteen-count indictment against fallen mankind. To reinforce the inclusiveness of the indictment, he reiterates the fact that *all* of fallen humanity, Jew and Gentile alike, is under sin (see [v. 9](#)). In [verses 10-18](#), he uses the term **none** (and its equivalent, **not even one**) six times in referring to man’s absolute lack of righteousness before God.

Romans 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “As **it is written**, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE.”

The indictment comes directly from Old Testament Scripture, to which **it is written** refers. Both Jesus and Satan used that phrase to introduce quotations from the Old Testament during the temptation in the wilderness ([Matthew 4:4, 6-7, 10](#)).

Matthew 4:4-10 (NASB)

⁴ “But He answered and said, “**It is written**, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

⁶ And said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for **it is written**, “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU”; and “ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, **it is written**, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’”

⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

⁹ and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For **it is written**, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’”

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

It is written translates the Greek perfect tense, indicating the continuity and permanence of what was **written** and implying its divine authority, which every faithful Jew and every faithful Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, acknowledged.

The **thirteen charges** of the indictment are presented in **three categories**—the first concerning **the character** ([vv. 10-12](#)), the second concerning **the conversation** ([vv. 13-14](#)), and the third concerning **the conduct** ([vv. 15-17](#)) of the accused.

The Character of the Accused

Romans 3:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

Under the heading of what could be called character, Paul lists the **first six** of the **thirteen charges**. Because of their fallen natures, men are **universally evil** ([v. 10b](#)), **spiritually ignorant** ([v. 11a](#)), **rebellious** ([v. 11b](#)), **wayward** ([v. 12a](#)), **spiritually useless** ([v. 12b](#)), and **morally corrupt** ([v. 12c](#)).

Romans 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “As it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE.”

First, mankind is universally evil, there being absolutely no exceptions. Quoting from the **Psalms**, Paul declares, “**There is none righteous, not even one.**” The full text of [Psalm 14:1](#) is, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.”

Righteousness is a major theme of the book of Romans, appearing in one form or another more than **thirty times**. Other terms from the same Greek root are usually translated “**justified,**” “**justification,**” or the like. Together they are used more than **sixty times** in the book of Romans.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the first charge Paul makes in his indictment is that of mankind’s unrighteousness.

Romans 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “As it is written, “**THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE.**”

Paul is using the term **righteous** in its most basic sense of being right before God, of being as God created man to be. Obviously, people are able to do many things that are morally right. Even the vilest person may occasionally do something commendable. But the apostle is not speaking of specific acts or even general patterns of behavior, but of man’s inner character. His point is that **there is** not a single person who has ever lived, apart from the sinless Lord Jesus Christ ([cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21](#)), whose innermost being could be characterized as **righteous** by God’s

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

standard. To prevent some people from thinking that they might be exceptions, Paul adds, **not even one.**

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

²¹ **“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

As already noted, there are obviously vast differences among people as to their kindness, love, generosity, honesty, truthfulness, and the like. But **not even one** person besides Christ has come remotely close to **righteous** perfection, which is the only standard acceptable to God. God’s standard of righteousness for men is the righteousness that He Himself possesses, which was manifest in Christ. **“Therefore, you are to be perfect,”** Jesus declared, **“as your heavenly Father is perfect”** ([Matthew 5:48 NASB](#)).

In other words, a person who is not as good as God is not acceptable to God. As Paul makes clear later in the epistle, and as the New Testament teaches throughout, men *can* become perfectly righteous, when the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them. The very truth that makes the gospel the **“good news”** is that God has provided a way for men to become perfect, divinely perfect. But that perfection comes entirely by God’s grace in response to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul is here speaking of men, *all* men, who are apart from Christ. In God’s sight, there are no levels of righteousness as far as salvation is concerned. There is either perfect righteousness in Christ or perfect sinfulness apart from Christ.

As mentioned above, from man’s perspective there are vast moral and spiritual differences among people. But men’s achieving God’s standard of righteousness on their own may be compared to a group of people trying to jump from the shore of a south seas island to the United States. A good athlete could jump twenty-five feet or more. Many could jump ten or fifteen feet, and a few might be in such poor shape that they could barely jump five. Measured against each other, therefore, their efforts would be considerably different. But measured against the distance from those islands to the United States, the differences among them would be undetectable and their efforts would be equally futile. Almost as if commenting on such a contest, Paul declares a few verses later: **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** ([Romans 3:23](#)).

Romans 3:11 (NASB)

¹¹ **“THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.”**

Second, man not only is universally evil but also spiritually ignorant. Quoting again from the Psalms, Paul says, **“There is none who understands”** (see [Psalms 14:2](#); [Psalms 53:3](#)). Even if men somehow had the ability to achieve God’s perfect righteousness, they would not know what it is or how to go about attaining it. To use the south seas island example again, they would have no idea as to which way to jump.

Man has no innate ability to fully comprehend God’s truth or His standard of righteousness. From God’s magnificent creation, man has sufficient evidence of His **“invisible attributes, His**

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

eternal power and divine nature” to make every person **“without excuse”** for not honoring and glorifying God ([Romans 1:20](#)). But apart from the ability to see that general revelation of His power and majesty, man has no spiritual capacity to know or understand God, because the **“natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised”** ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)).

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle points out that man's spiritual ignorance is not due to unfortunate outward circumstances or lack of opportunity. It is due solely to his own innate sinful nature that does not *want* to know and understand, much less obey and serve God. Unsaved persons are **“darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart”** ([Ephesians 4:18](#)).

Men are not sinful and hardened against God because they are ignorant of Him, but, to the contrary, they are ignorant of Him because of their sinful and hardened disposition. People have a certain sense about God through the testimony of creation, as already noted, and also through the witness of their consciences ([Romans 2:15](#)).

Romans 2:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ **“In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.”**

But their willfully sinful nature blocks out that testimony and witness. The natural man is thereby hardened in his heart and darkened in his mind. He not only does not understand God but has no inclination to do so.

Many years ago, a fascinating but pathetic story of a duck in a Toronto park made headlines for several days (*Toronto Star*, Nov. 4-13, 1971). The duck, who came to be called Ringo, made her home at the park lake. One day she accidentally poked her bill through the ring of a pull tab from a pop can and was not able to extricate herself. She was, of course, unable to eat and would soon starve to death. When her plight was noticed by some park visitors, she became something of a celebrity. Park personnel and animal experts tried numerous ways to catch Ringo so she could be helped. They even called in a champion duck caller. People tried luring her with food but without success. Unfortunately, the frightened Ringo mistook all the efforts to help her as being threats. The rescuers lost sight of her and never did catch her. It is not known if Ringo eventually dislodged the pull tab before she died.

Fallen and condemned man, trapped in his sin, is similarly confused. Because he sees it as a threat to his life-style rather than an eternal blessing, he makes every effort to escape the gospel, which the Lord has so graciously provided for his salvation.

Romans 3:11 (NASB)

¹¹ **“THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.”**

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

Third, in addition to being universally evil and spiritually ignorant, fallen man is rebellious. “There is none who seeks for God”, Paul declares, alluding again to [Psalm 14:2](#).

[Psalm 14:2 \(NASB\)](#)

²“The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.”

Judging from the vast number of religions in the world with millions of zealous adherents, one would think that a great many people are diligently seeking after God. But Scripture makes clear, in this passage and in many others, that all religious systems and efforts are, in reality, attempts to escape the true God and to discover or manufacture false gods of one's own liking.

God has given the absolute assurance that anyone who seeks Him with his heart will find Him ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)).

[Jeremiah 29:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”

Jesus offers the divine promise that everyone who sincerely asks of Him will receive, that everyone who sincerely seeks Him will find Him, and that everyone who sincerely knocks on the door of heaven will have it opened to him ([Matthew 7:8](#)). But the Lord knows that man's sinful inclination is *not* to seek Him, and He therefore seeks individuals out to draw them to Himself.

[Matthew 7:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸“For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

During the council at Jerusalem in the early days of the church, James reminded the gathering of apostles and elders of God's ancient promises that “**after these things I will return, and I will rebuild the Tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,**¹⁷so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, and all the gentiles who are called by My Name” ([Acts 15:16-17 NASB](#)).

Peter gives assurance in the clearest possible words that the Lord does not wish “...for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” ([2 Peter 3:9 NASB](#)).

But man-made religions are demon-inspired efforts to escape from God, not to find Him. Every person who comes to Jesus Christ for salvation has been sent to Him through the divine initiative of God the Father ([John 6:37](#)).

[John 6:37 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁷“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”

“No one can come to Me,” Jesus goes on to say, “**unless the Father who sent Me draws him**” ([John 6:44 NASB](#)). The only person, therefore, who seeks God is the person who has responded positively to God's seeking him. The person who truly **seeks for God** is like David, who declared, “**I have set the Lord continually before me...**” ([Psalm 16:8](#)). Such a person seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ([Matthew 6:33](#)).

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

³³“**But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**”

God becomes the focus of everything, the source of everything, the beginning and end of everything. To truly seek for God is to respect and adore His sovereign majesty and to feed on the truth of His Word. It is to obey His commandments, to speak to Him in prayer, to live consciously in His presence with a desire to please Him. No one can do such things naturally but only by the Spirit of God working through him. The natural inclination of men is to “...seek after their own interests...” ([Philippians 2:21 NASB](#)).

Romans 3:12 (NASB)

¹²“**ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.**”

Fourth, Paul charges that men are naturally wayward. Continuing to quote from the Psalms ([14:3](#)), he declares that “all have turned aside” from God.

Psalm 14:3 (NASB)

³“**They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.**”

The person who is naturally evil, naturally ignorant of God’s truth, and naturally rebellious against God, will inevitably naturally live apart from God’s will.

Turned aside is from *ekklinō*, and has the basic meaning of leaning in the wrong direction. In a military context, it referred to a soldier’s running the wrong way in other words deserting in the midst of battle.

Speaking of the universal human inclination to go against God’s way, Isaiah wrote, “**All of us like sheep have gone astray each of us has turned to his own way...**” ([Isaiah 53:6 NASB](#)).

In the early church, the gospel was sometimes called “**the Way**” ([Acts 9:2](#)). and Christians were often referred to as followers of the Way.

Acts 9:2 (NASB)

²“**And asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.**”

Jesus said of Himself, “**I am the way and the truth, and the life...**” ([John 14:6 NASB](#)). Even the demon who had given a certain slave girl the power of divination acknowledged through her that Paul and his companions were “...**bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation**” ([Acts 16:17 NASB](#), *emphasis added*).

Luke referred to some Jewish opponents of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus as men who were “...**speaking evil of the Way...**” ([Acts 19:9 NASB](#)), and because of that opposition, “**there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way**” ([Acts 19:23 NASB](#)).

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

In his defense before the governor Felix, Paul said, “**This I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets**” ([Acts 24:14 NASB](#)).

The writer of Hebrews spoke of Christ’s atoning work as “...**a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh**” ([Hebrews 10:20 NASB](#)). Peter spoke of false teachers who had infiltrated the church as those who had forsaken “...**the right way...**” of the true gospel ([2 Peter 2:15](#)), which is “...**the way of righteousness...**” ([2 Peter 2:21](#)).

[2 Peter 2:15 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁵“Forsaking **the right way**, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

[2 Peter 2:21 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹“For it would be better for them not to have known **the way of righteousness**, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.”

On the other hand, the basic pattern of living of the natural man is characterized as “...**the evil way...**” ([Proverbs 8:13](#)), the “...**way which seems right to a man, but [whose] end is the way of death**” ([Proverbs 14:12](#)).

[Proverbs 8:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and **the evil way** and the perverted mouth, I hate.”

[Proverbs 14:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹²“There is a way *which seems right to a man*, But its end is the way of death.”

The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody told of being asked by the warden of a large prison in New York City to speak to the inmates. Because there was no chapel or other suitable or safe place to speak to the group, he preached from a gangway at one end of a large tier of cells, unable to see the face of a single prisoner.

After the message, he asked permission to talk face-to-face with some of the men through the bars of their cells. He soon discovered that most of the men had not even been listening to his message. When Moody would ask an inmate why he was in prison, the man almost invariably declared his innocence.

He would insist that a false witness testified against him, or that he was mistaken for the person who really committed the crime, or that the judge or jury was prejudiced against him, or he would give some other reason he was unjustly incarcerated. “I began to get discouraged,” Moody said, “but when I had gotten almost through I found one man with his elbows on his knees and two streams of tears running down his cheeks. I looked in at the little window and said, ‘My friend, what is your trouble?’ He looked up with despair and remorse on his face and said, ‘My sins are more than I can bear.’ I said, ‘Thank God for that.’”

The evangelist was thankful because he knew that no man is open to God’s way until he forsakes his own way, that he will not seek salvation until he admits he is lost.

09-24-17

Series: The Book of Romans

Romans 3:12 (NASB)

¹²“ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, **TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS**; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

Fifth, Paul charges that the natural man is spiritually worthless. Together, that is, all of fallen mankind, **they have become useless.** The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek term translated here as **useless** was often used to describe milk that had turned sour and rancid, thereby becoming unfit to drink or to be used to make butter, cheese, or anything else edible. In ancient Greek literature, the word was even used of the senseless laughter of a moron.

Apart from a saving relationship to Jesus Christ, a person is a spiritually dead branch, totally unable to produce any fruit. As such, it is lifeless and worthless, fit only to be thrown into the fire to be burned (**John 15:6**).

John 15:6 (NASB)

⁶“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”

Paul’s letter to Titus emphasizes the same tragic reality when it reflects on the utter worthlessness of even religious men (**Titus 1:16**).

Titus 1:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.”

The natural man is useless for the purposes of God and, much like the worthless dead branch, is destined for the fires of hell.

Romans 3:12 (NASB)

¹²“ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; **THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.**”

Sixth, the natural man is charged with being corrupt, which is both a repetition of the first charge and something of a summary of the previous five charges. There is none who does good, Paul says, **there is not even one.**

Chrēstotēs (does good) refers to what is upright, specifically to what is morally upright. Measured by God’s perfect standard of righteousness, the natural man has no ability to do anything upright and **good**. As already mentioned, relative to other human beings, some people obviously are better behaved. But no human being has within himself either the desire or the capacity for the **good** that is holy, perfect, and God-glorifying by the divine standard.

The story is told of a man in Scotland who was walking through a park one Saturday afternoon, carrying a small New Testament in a leather case. Thinking the case contained a camera, a group of young people asked him to take their picture. In response, he said, “I already have it.” When the astonished youths asked him where and when he had taken it, he took out the Testament and read **Romans 3:9-23**. After saying, “**That is your picture,**” he took the opportunity to witness to them about Christ.