

## The Human Condition

### Romans 3:9-20

#### Introduction

Jenna Rose Alpern and her husband were looking for an apartment in Jerusalem. After an online search – they believed they found the place they wanted. With a baby on the way -- - the two-bedroom seemed just right. However – when they looked over the rental contract – they noticed that it came with a Messiah clause.

At the bottom of the contract were the words: ‘Upon the coming of the Messiah, tenants agree to vacate the apartment within fifteen days.’ Such clauses are unique to Jerusalem and reflect the Jewish belief that the Messiah is coming to Jerusalem to rule and reign from there. Property owners want to maintain their right to return to the city should that occur in their lifetime.

The difference between Judaism and Christianity is that the Jews are waiting for the Messiah to come the first time - - - Christians hold that He already came - - - died for our sins / rose again - - - and is coming back!

The author of Hebrews refers to the two comings of Jesus

**Hebrews 9:27-28 - 'And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.'**

Isaiah 53 played an instrumental role in opening the eyes of one Jewish skeptic to the Christian faith

Louis Lapidès – came from a Jewish home in NYC / attended orthodox synagogue

**Louis Lapidès: 'I never once thought Jesus had any connection to the Jewish people. I just thought He was a god of the Gentiles.'**

His image of Jesus was that of the Roman Catholic faith / the crucifix - - - a guy hanging on a cross - - - with a crown of thorns

**Louis: 'It didn't make any sense to me. Why would you worship a man on a cross with nails in His hands and his feet?'**

Later – after a tour of duty in Vietnam / seeing the horrors of combat - - - his faith was shaken - - - and he was not sure what to believe

He moved to California - - - where he was challenged to read a Bible - - He agreed to - - - but said he would not read the NT because he was Jewish

He came to Isaiah 53 - - - He was stunned! – the passage sounded so much like the Jesus of the Christian faith - - - He believed that Christians must have taken the text and altered it in their own Bible

He wrote to his grandmother and asked her to send him a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures – so he could check it out for himself

She did - - and lo and behold - - - it said the same thing

**Isaiah 53:5 - 'But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.'**

**Isaiah 53:6 - 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.'** [kjv]

Now he was intrigued - - he ventured upon opening the NT portion of Scripture and was further stunned to read the opening page

**Matthew 1:1 - 'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.'**

He was stunned – this is about Jews – son of David / Abraham

He couldn't put the Bible down – became a Christian – as he came to see the full picture of a Christ crucified for sinners -- - but risen again – atoning for the sins of His people

Paul opened the book of Romans with these words

**Romans 1:16 - 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.'**

We are in the midst of a portion of Romans where Paul is establishing the utter necessity of the gospel for both Jew and Gentile

In this passage -- - he paints a sobering portrait of the human condition – as he describes all humanity after the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin

There is none righteous / none good / none who seeks for God

All need the gospel -- - because all are sinners

### **I. None Righteous - vv. 9-12**

Here we come to this picture of the human condition

Any treatment of sin or the human condition in Christian literature inevitably goes to Romans 3

It is the premier text on sin

The first thing we see about our condition is the universal extent of sin

'none who seeks for God / all have turned aside' / none good / none righteous - - - not even one

Men do not like this picture Scripture gives us of ourselves

It is a black picture – it is dark / unflattering

It's like someone holding up a portrait of ourselves - - - where our mother dressed us in a turtleneck sweater with corduroy pants - - - cringe worthy - - I can't look - - - my eyes

The reality – man is in a desperate condition – he needs to see this portrait – if he is to enjoy any benefit from the gospel

Before there was Joel Osteen - - - there was Robert Schuller – crystal cathedral

He was sort of the champion of non-sinner's gospel

He thought that man's greatest problem was that he lacked self-esteem / self-worth

Robert Schuller: 'I don't think that 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 evangelistic enterprise, than the unchristian, uncouth strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition.'

Robert Schuller: 'the gospel message is not only faulty but potentially dangerous if it has to put a person down before it attempts to lift him up.' [p. 8]

So - - - his message was to avoid telling people they were sinners - - - all positive thinking – [he also was a disciple of Norman Vincent Peale] - - - and he was quite popular - - - for a while

Marvin R. Vincent: 'If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found.'

If people want to feel religious - - - but don't want to be told about sin - - - here you go

But – that is not the method or the message of the Apostle Paul

There is none good – not even one / none who seeks for God / etc.

Are the Jews better or better off than the Gentiles since they have God's Word? [no]

The Jews are sinners by transgressing the Law of God

The Gentiles are sinners by transgressing the Law of nature – the conscience

As it is written [v. 10] - - - Paul asserts his case by quoting OT Scripture

John Calvin: 'He has hitherto used proofs or arguments to convince men of their iniquity; he now begins to reason from authority; and it is to the Christians the strongest kind of proof, when authority is derived from the only true God.'

When it comes to truth – our question is: 'What does the Bible say?' [not Norman Vincent Peale or Robert Schuller]

SCC Doctrinal Statement - - - The Holy Scriptures

*We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as inspired of God and inerrant in the original writings and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life. [II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21]*

What we find in Scripture is this portrait of man as a sinner

Job 15:16 - ' . . . Man who drinks iniquity like water.'

Isaiah 64:6 - 'For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind take us away.'

MLJ: 'Man by nature is a God-hater; he is at enmity with God, He is dead in trespasses and sins.'

Man is unable to change his condition on his own

He cannot just decide to stop being a vile sinner

He can make some adjustments - - perhaps kick a bad habit or two - - - but in the end - - - he's just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic - - - he's still doomed

The other classic text on the human condition after the Fall is Genesis 6

God saw the wickedness on the earth in Noah's day – and decided to start over

*Genesis 6:5, 6* - 'Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.'

*Genesis 6:7* - 'And the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.'"

God looks on humanity – and He just sees evil everywhere / violence / murder – so much that He wants to start over with Noah and his family

The flood account shows us: the universal nature of sin / God's hatred of evil / also the pervasive nature of sin [it continued on afterwards]

God could wipe the earth clean - - - start over with Noah and his family - - - it didn't take long for all the same old sins to resurface [the flood was a temporary measure – a stop -gap to halt the progress of evil at the time]

Joseph Parker: 'If you were today to destroy all the world, with the single exception of one household - the most pious and honorable that ever lived, in less than half a century we should see all the bad characteristics returning.'

Sin is that ingrained in us

*Romans 3:10-11* - 'as it is written, "there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.'

The whole of humanity - - - with the exception of Jesus Christ

Left to ourselves – we run from the light / hide from the light

*John 3:19* - 'this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.'

Man suppresses the truth - - he turns from God / runs from God / hides from God

Rosaria Butterfield was an activist homosexual who became a Christian – while reading the Bible - - - as research for her feminist lectures

Rosaria Butterfield: 'I often wonder: God, why pick me? I didn't ask to be a Christian convert. I didn't seek the Lord. Instead, I ran like the wind when someone would start peddling the gospel to me.'

Some do come to Jesus – they respond to the message

How is this possible when Paul says there is none who seeks for God?

Answer: grace

God is His grace draws the sinner to Himself in salvation

He overcomes their sinful resistance to His truth / He opens blind eyes / draws the sinner to himself

Sometimes theologians refer to this as *irresistible grace*

It all goes back to the sinful nature of humanity

Our starting point: 'there is none who seeks for God'

Spurgeon: 'Men do not seek God first; God seeks them first; and if any of you are seeking Him today it is because He has first sought you.'

John 6:44 - 'No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.'

We could say – 'no one *will* come to Me . . .' - - - due to our sin

We know this intuitively - - - as well as from Scripture

J.I. Packer points to this idea - - - of how we view our own salvation

If you are a Christian -- - you don't thank yourself for being smart enough to believe / or that you had the good sense to turn from your sin

J.I. Packer: 'You would never dream of dividing the credit for your salvation between God and yourself. . . you have never told God that, while you are grateful for the means and opportunities of grace that He gave you, you realize that you have to thank, not Him, but yourself for the fact that you responded to His call.'

J.I. Packer: 'You do not put it down to chance or accident that you came under Christian influence when you did. You did not put it down to chance or accident that you attended a Christian church, that you heard the Christian gospel, that you had Christian friends and, perhaps a Christian home, that the Bible fell into your hands, that you saw your need of Christ and came to trust Him as your Savior. You do not attribute your repenting and believing to your own wisdom, or prudence, or sound judgment, or good sense.'

How does God take a sin loving rebel -- - who runs from Him and does no good / does not seek Him - - - and changes Him into one who seeks Him / and desires to follow Christ - - - and is committed unto holiness?

Answer: the grace of God

John 6:37 - 'All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.'

When Jesus asked Peter – ‘Who do you say that I am?’

Peter gave the great confession

Matthew 16:16-17 - 'And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'"

Jesus told the disciples

John 15:16 - 'You did not choose Me but I chose you . . .'

If you find within your heart - - - a desire to trust in and follow Jesus - - - attribute it not to your wisdom or goodness but to grace – Romans 3 shows us who we really are

## II. No Fear of God - vv. 13-18

Paul here elaborates on the sinfulness of humanity

Every aspect of man has been twisted and corrupted by sin

Addison Leitch: 'If the color of sin were blue, every aspect of us would be some shade of blue.'

Sin manifests itself in whole host of ways

Sinful speech

Jesus told us that corrupt speech reflects a corrupt heart

**Matthew 12:34 - '... for the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.'**

**Matthew 15:19 - 'Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.'**

Sinful man takes the Lord's name in vain / lies and seeks to deceive with his speech / is profane and crude / reviles and slanders / etc.

v. 15 – acts of murder

v. 17 – way of peace they have not known

Sinful man is always in conflict with other sinners

No fear of God – v. 18

A lack of fear of God - - - is the fountain from which all other evils flow

To not fear God is to live as though God does not exist - - - and that He will hold no one accountable for their actions in this life

Book of Proverbs places the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom

**Proverbs 9:10 - 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.'**

We are wise to acknowledge God above - - - and His authority / His righteousness

**Patrick Morley: 'There's a God we want and there's a God who is and they are not the same God. The turning point comes when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.'** [God is Relevant, p. 84]

The God we want is a God who will bless our every act - - - tell us to indulge our every sinful desire - - - and promise us that there will be no day of judgment or accountability

That God doesn't exist – is a figment of sinful imagination

The true God - - - is revealed to us thru Scripture

He is the God whose wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness – Romans 1:18



But this same God - - - loved us enough to send His Son to die for sinners

**Romans 5:8 - 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'**

Paul is developing the case – not that we are hopeless but that Christ Jesus is our only hope

### **III. The Knowledge of Sin - vv. 19-20**

Paul refers to the Law of God

The Law does not make anyone righteous - - - it exposes our sin

The Law was not designed to give life but to convict men of sin – be our tutor to lead us to Christ where we can be justified by faith

To be silenced is to know one's guilt – to be left with no argument before God

When we feel our sin / know our disease - - - recognize that Christ is the great physician who heals the sick - - - forgives sinners - - - we will run to Him without delay

### **Conclusion**

When FDR was President – he was confined to a wheelchair in his latter years – because of his polio – he refused to allow photographers to photograph him in his wheelchair – because it was an unflattering image - - - he felt that it communicated an image of weakness for the country then at war

The reality is that Roosevelt was physically weak – died before the war was over

God holds up our picture in Romans 3 - - - it's not a very pretty portrait

None good / none righteous / none who seeks for God

You and I are diseased / infected with the virus of sin - - - left unhealed - - - we will go into eternity - - - where we will experience the wrath of God

But God offers a full pardon to sinners thru the blood of Jesus

**John 6:37 - 'All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.'**