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Sermon Notes

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## **Total Depravity and Total Salvation**

### **Romans 3:9-18**

#### **I. Review**

- A. The Gospel of God: Supernatural Power for Complete Salvation
- B. The Wrath of God: God's Passionate Response to Evil
- C. The Central issue: Exchanging the Glory of God for an Image: Result, 21 Evils
- D. Warning Against Judgmentalism & Hypocrisy: "I don't need grace!"
- E. Judgment Day awaits; "judgment according to deeds": eternal life or eternal wrath; NO PARTIALITY
- F. All humanity possess the law of God written in their hearts... so Jews don't have unfair advantage
- G. Circumcision—value for those who obey they Law; "true Jew" heart circumcised by Holy Spirit
- H. Last week: Paul defends doctrine: 1) God broke covenant with Jews; 2) Do evil that good may result

#### **II. The Universality of Sin: Paul Completes His Case**

- A. Paul's Concluding Questions

**vs. 9** ***"What shall we conclude, then? Are we any better?"***

- 1. Question: who is the "we"??

"We Jews" "We Christians" "We apostles..."

- 2. Further difficulty: "Are we any better?" OR "Are we worse off...?"

- 3. **Either way!** No "we" is any better or worse off than any other "they"!!

- B. Paul's Accusation: Universal Bondage to Sin

***Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.***

1. Constant human tendency: minimize personal guilt
  - a. “We” are better than “they”
  - b. I don’t need grace the way they do!
2. Paul’s “charge”
  - a. Greek word is judicial... a formal charge in a court of Law

***Matthew 27:37 “Above [Jesus’] head they placed the written charge against him...”***

- b. So Paul as prosecuting attorney has made his case

***“Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.”***

3. **UNDER SIN:** Bondage!! Compulsion
  - a. we don’t mind admitting we sin from time to time
  - b. WE HATE the idea we are slaves to sin
  - c. we have “free will”... we can stop sinning any time we want to

Maybe! But you will never want to! Your will is not free, but a slave of your character

4. Every human being is born a slave to sin... acting it out as soon as Law is understood
5. EVEN JEWS! That stung their pride... it stings ours too!

***John 8:31-34 “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”***

### III. Human Character Apart From Grace: Scripture Diagnoses the Sinful Heart

- A. Scripture’s Role: shedding clear light on wretched darkness

***vs. 10 “As it is written...”***

1. Far from Scripture: “I’m basically a good person...”
2. The closer we get to Scripture, the more sin we see

***James 1:22-25 [Law is a mirror]***

Illus. Scottish man, Bible in a leather carrying case, youths came thinking he had a camera, "Take our picture!"; "I already have it" and read Romans 3:9-18

B. Old Testament Quotations: A Cumulative Picture and an Interpreter's Problem

1. Paul cites five Psalms and one passage from Isaiah
2. Clear picture of all humanity... NO ONE ESCAPES
  - a. a string of verses... arranged to convict all humanity

***Psalm 14:1-3 "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."***

***Psalm 5:9 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit."***

***Psalm 140:3 "The poison of vipers is on their lips."***

***Psalm 10:7 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."***

***Isaiah 59:7-8 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know."***

***Psalm 36:1 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."***

All humanity condemned apart from God... no one righteous, no one seeking God,  
NO NOT ONE!!

- b. Interpreter's problem

***Psalm 14:4-5 "Will evildoers never learn—those who devour my people as men eat bread... God is present in the company of the righteous."***

WAIT A MINUTE! I thought Paul is using these verses to prove that there is "No one righteous, not even one!" Yet here in Psalm 14:5, it says "God is present in the company of the righteous." Isn't Paul taking these verses out of context?

OT constantly speaks of THE RIGHTEOUS and THE WICKED

- c. Interpreter's solution

- i) OT verses cited for cumulative effect... no one verse paints whole picture

ii) Paul knew about the “righteous” and the “wicked”... but how do the righteous get to be righteous??? BY GRACE ALONE

***Romans 4:3 ‘Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.’”***

iii) ALL PSALMS CITED ARE FROM DAVID... and he already said

***Psalm 32:1-2 “Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.” vs. 11 “Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart.”***

“Righteous” are different from the “wicked” only by the grace of God... David knew how sinful he was, and that he was forgiven only by God’s mercy:

***Psalm 5:7 “But I, BY YOUR GREAT MERCY, will come into your house.”***

Paul is NOT taking David’s verses out of context... these Old Testament quotations paint an accurate picture of the entire human race apart from God’s saving grace

BUT what do they say??

C. The Centrality of God: Breaking the First and Greatest Commandment

1. “I’m a pretty good person”... usually focuses on comparisons on how we treat other people
2. Totally neglects God

***Matthew 22:37-38 “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.’”***

3. NOTE: Focus on God in these OT quotations

***[At the start] “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.”***

***[At the finish] “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”***

4. “I’m a pretty good person” but I never think about God

D. Total Depravity

“Total”: every person, in every area of being

Every person: "No, not one." (vs. 10, 12)

Every area of being: No "spark of divinity", pure citadel of holiness untouched by evil

1. Depravity of Character

***"There is no one righteous, not even one."***

- a. on Judgment Day, the righteousness God requires no one will possess of himself
- b. God loves righteousness, hates wickedness... all are wicked in His sight
- c. depraved minds

***"There is no one who understands..."***

- i) technological advancements mean nothing on that Day

***1 Corinthians 1:21 "...the world through its wisdom did not know God..."***

- ii) they haven't understood GOD

Despite a universe filled with evidence of God's power and being, despite a Law and a history filled with God's statements about Himself, no one has understood God

***John 17:25 "Righteous father, the world has not known you!!!"***

- d. depraved desires

***"No one who seeks God."***

- i) incredibly important theological statement
- ii) no one is looking for God... no one seeking Him; even if it means salvation

***Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."***

***Isaiah 55:6 "Seek the Lord while he may be found."***

- iii) they are seeking idols or worldly pleasures

***Philippians 2:21 "For everyone seeks his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ."***

- e. depraved response to God

***vs. 12 "All have turned away..."***

- i) word used to refer to a soldier who runs in terror from opposing army
  - ii) generally word means to AVOID AT ALL COSTS
  - iii) God is utterly repulsive... everyone turns away from Him
- f. depraved value

***“They have together become worthless.”***

- i) sin loves company... and altogether the human race becomes WORTHLESS
- ii) utter tragedy: created with incredible worth IN IMAGE OF GOD
- iii) sin makes us worthless, of no use to God

***Jeremiah 13:1-11 [The Linen Belt] “These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt—completely useless.”***

- iv) God created us FOR A PURPOSE, to bear much fruit; sin makes us useless
- g. depraved actions (motives)

***vs. 12 “There is no one who does good, not even one.”***

- i) shocking assessment to those who feel “I’m basically a good person”
- ii) depravity here reaches even our best deeds
- iii) perhaps what’s in view is “goodness” of deed destroyed by foul motives
- iv) depraved character pollutes every action

***Matthew 19:16-17 “Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, ‘Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?’ ‘Why do you ask me about what is good?’ Jesus replied. ‘There is only One who is good.’” [“No one is good but God alone.”]***

Only God is good through and through, and thus only God does truly good deeds.. another time, Jesus focused on how character affects conversation:

***Matthew 12:33-35 “Make a tree good, and its fruit will be good; make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth***

*speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”*

## 2. Depravity of Conversation

*vs. 12-14 “Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they keep deceiving; the poison of vipers is under their lips; their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”*

- a. death, death, death... graves, deceit, poison, cursing... death!
- b. the mouth does more damage to relationships than anything else
- c. “Open grave” = the stench of death, repulsive
- d. deceit & poison “under their lips” = secret damage, gossip and slander

No taming a serpent! Illus: man who tried to take a baby rattlesnake home as a pet

*James 3:8 “No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”*

- e. cursing and bitterness = open attack, verbal barrage, hatred

*James 3:6, 9 “The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.... With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men... out of the same mouth come praise and cursing...”*

- f. the tongue becomes a major source of judgment

*Matthew 12:36-37 “But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

## 3. Depravity of Conduct

*vs. 15-17 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.”*

- a. feet traveling on a path represent lifestyle
- b. Christianity called “The Way”
- c. the feet are eager, zealous to kill

But I haven't killed anybody! Jesus said, "If you have anger you have committed murder in your heart." What restrains killing: Police, courts, jails, electric chairs... not righteousness

- d. "Ruin and misery" are characteristic of their paths... their daily lives
  - i) "Ruin" = shattering, like broken pieces of pottery... sin destroys lives the way concrete destroys fine China vases
  - ii) "Misery" =wretchedness... deep, emotional distress
- e. "Way of peace" totally foreign to them... their sin churns up evil

***Isaiah 57:20-21 The wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."***

- i) don't know how to have peace with themselves
- ii) don't know how to have peace with their neighbors
- iii) certainly don't know how to have peace with God
- f. NO FEAR OF GOD... root cause of all this sin

***vs. 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."***

- i) they have no fear of consequences... no judgment day
- ii) "Before their eyes" = women who sat across from Jesus' tomb and watched it... constant, concentrated focus

Summary: Scripture diagnosis of the unsaved human condition: **TOTAL DEPRAVITY**... "**total**" in that everyone is alike under sin... Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, young and old, male and female... no one escapes; "**total**" in that every area of human existence & person deeply affected: depraved in character, depraved in conversation, depraved in conduct

## VI. The Staggering Implications Of This Doctrine

- A. ABSOLUTELY NO NATIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS... APART FROM WORK OF Christ, every last one of us would be condemned justly for eternity
- B. No one can save him/herself
  - 1. No one is seeking God



2. No one suddenly “decides” to follow Jesus

***John 6:44 “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”***

- C. Every Godward impulse comes from God’s grace in us
- D. Salvation is TOTALLY by God’s grace alone... our nature opposes salvation at every step
- E. If anyone gets saved, we don’t look in the character & heart of that person for the answer to the question “Why did they get saved?” free, sovereign grace alone saves sinners like this!!

## V. The Great Reversal of the Gospel

- ***There is no one righteous, not even one***

Romans 3:21 “But now a righteousness from God, apart from Law has been made known... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

- ***there is no one who understands***

Rom 15:21 Those who were not told about him will see, & those who have not heard will understand

Luke 24:45 “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures”

1 Corinthians 2:16 “We have the mind of Christ.”

- ***no one who seeks God***

Hebrews 11:6 “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who diligently seek God.”

- ***All have turned away***

[Jews] 2 Cor. 3:16 “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

[Gentiles] 1 Thess. 1:9 They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

- ***they have together become worthless***

Revelation 3:4 “They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.”

Jn15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; If a man remains in me & I in him, he will bear much fruit

- ***there is no one who does good, not even one***

Galatians 5:22 “The fruit of the Spirit is... kindness, goodness, gentleness”

- ***Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.***

Proverbs 10:11 “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life...”

- ***Their feet are swift to shed blood***

Romans 10:15 "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news!"

- ***shattering and misery mark their ways***

Luke 4:18 "The Lord has sent me ... to bind up the brokenhearted..." [hearts shattered by sin]

- ***the way of peace they do not know***

Jn 14:4, 6 You know the way to the place where I am going...I am the way and the truth and the life.

- ***There is no fear of God before their eyes."***

2 Corinthians 7:1 "... perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ offers a total salvation from total depravity!!