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Sermon Notes

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## **The Prosecutor's Summary: The Whole World Silent Before God**

### **Romans 3:19-20**

#### 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. Paul defends doctrine: 1) God broke covenant with Jews; 2) Do evil that good may result
- I. Last week: Series of OT quotations; culminating effect

***Romans 3:9-10 "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'"***

#### II. Why So Much on Sin?

- A. The True Nature of Salvation... not just "Believe" but "Repent and Believe"

***Mark 1:15 "Repent and believe the gospel!"***

***Romans 2:4 "... the kindness of God leads you toward repentance."***

1. Modern evangelism: light and quick on sin, heavy and long on benefits of salvation
2. Mark of false prophets

***Jeremiah 6:13-14 “Prophets and priests alike all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people slightly [lightly, as though it were not serious]. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.”***

3. We miss the true healing of the Gospel: REPENTANCE and FAITH

- a. without brokenness over sin there is no repentance... without repentance there is no salvation

***Matthew 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”***

***James 4:8-10 “Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.”***

- b. true gospel ministry produces grief over sin, coupled with hatred of sin, and a total turning away from self-reliance
- c. false gospel ministry seeks to add Christianity to an already full life
- d. true dealing with sin takes time and gets very specific

4. Repentance a total turning away from sin: idolatrous thoughts, rebellious ways

Repentance also a total turning TO the Lord

***Isaiah 55:6-7 “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake His way and the evil man His thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.”***

- a. the wicked MUST forsake his way... daily lifestyle of rebellion to God
- b. the evil man MUST forsake his thoughts... idolatrous concept of God
- c. self-reliance totally rejected
- d. turn TO THE LORD... by faith openly receiving!
- e. salvation then give freely by mercy!!

Thus, the nature of true salvation requires a lengthy treatment on sin... in order to produce deep, lasting repentance

B. The True Nature of the Human Heart: Elusive and Twisted

**Jeremiah 17:9** *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”*

1. Human heart is treacherous... deceitful, tricky, twisting and a con-artist
2. Single aim: to deny all wrong-doing, to deal with personal sin lightly

**Proverbs 5:6** *“[The adulteress] gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.”*

**Proverbs 30:20** *“This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.’”*

3. Sin is deceives the heart, and the heart believes the lie
4. God deals thoroughly with sin in Romans 1:18-3:20 because the heart will not listen to a quick treatment

Illus: Like a radio scanning quickly across many stations, the mind tunes out what comes in and is displeasing...

For two reasons Paul must deal thoroughly with sin: 1) The True Nature of Salvation (Repentance and Faith); 2) The True Nature of the Human Heart

### III. Paul’s Closing Statement: The Prosecutor Rests His Case

A. The Four Steps to Paul’s Argument (KEY: so that, therefore, because)

1. Step 1: The Law speaks to the Jews

**vs. 19a** *“We know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law...”*

2. Step 2: Goal/Effect... The whole world silent & accountable to God

**vs. 19b** *“...so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.”*

3. Step 3: The reason why every mouth is stopped... No one justified by works of the Law

**vs. 20a** *“Therefore, no one will be justified by observing the Law*

4. Step 4: Why is no one justified by works of the Law?... The Law brings knowledge of sin

vs. 20b *“for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”*

Let's work backwards to understand more fully the steps in Paul's argument

B. Step 4: Law Brings Knowledge of Sin

1. How? Answer #1 from some commentators... Law tells us what sin is
  - a. We wouldn't know what sin was except through the commandments
  - b. law tells us “Thou shalt not steal, kill, lie, commit adultery, etc.”
  - c. this educates us as to what God's standards are
  - d. BUT this answer doesn't fit the train of Paul's thought

“By the works of the Law no person shall be justified in God's sight, because the Law tells us what sin is... it tells us not to kill or steal or lie.” That makes no sense!!

Rather law can't save us because of a deeper problem within ourselves

2. Better: Law exposes Sin within us... gives us a full knowledge of the cancer in our souls
  - a. Greek word: epignosis = “acknowledgment” of sin... not just intellectual data as to what sins are, but more that sin is a festering disease within us

***Romans 7:7-8 “What then shall we say? Is the law sin? Certainly not! For I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.”***

- b. until law comes, sin lies hidden beneath the surface
- c. what happens when Law meets unregenerate human heart?

Illus.: Walking in with the family mail... “For parents only”... The words aren't sin, but they stimulate sinful rebellion

- d. human heart without the Spirit rebels against Law... Law therefore reveals deep problem: rebellion against God

***Romans 8:7 “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”***

- e. root of sin is rebellion against God... a seething hostility against God's sovereign power... a willingness to exchange His glory for anything
- f. Law shows us what sin is... it reveals that flesh within, the hostility of our hearts

Illus. Sinful nature like a viper... Law acts like bait to get the rebellious viper to snap

C. Step 3: No One Justified by the Works of the Law

**vs. 20a** *“Therefore, no one will be justified by observing the Law...”*

1. Why? Because Law promotes that sinful response... it does nothing the kill sin
2. All Law does is give more and more opportunities for sin to reveal its hold on us
3. LAW CANNOT BRING RIGHTEOUSNESS!!!!

Proof #1: Jewish history

**Galatians 3:21-22** *“If a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come through the law.”*

- a. Jews had plenty of time to demonstrate power of Law in bringing righteousness
- b. All law ever did was make the Jews more and more sinful & rebellious

Proof #2: Christ's death on the Cross

**Galatians 2:21** *“I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing.”*

4. Why can't Law promote righteousness?

**Romans 8:3** *“What the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”*

- a. Law is not defective... nothing wrong with the commandments
- b. Law's effect on us is weakened by the power of sin in our unregenerate hearts

Steps 4 and 3: Because of the power of sin, Law awakens sin not faith, and therefore by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified

D. Step 1: The Law Speaks to Jews in Front of the Whole World

**vs. 19** *“We know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.”*

1. God Gave Law to Jews... But No Righteousness Ever Came

NOTE: “Law” here comes after a series of quotes from Psalms & Isaiah... “Law” = Old Testament Scriptures... the Prophets speaking God’s word to a rebellious people

2. This Law only awakened rebellion and sin in the Jews

3. God waited patiently, gave a full display in Jewish history for FIFTEEN CENTURIES

- a. God gave Moses Law in 15 century B.C.
- b. The day the Law came, the Jews made a golden calf
- c. Soon after, the Jews rebelled against God and refused to take the Promised Land
- d. After 40 years of wandering, God commanded them to conquer Jericho... but Achan stole some gold & a robe
- e. Israel failed to clear the Promised Land of the Canaanite peoples and they consistently led Israel into idolatry and wickedness
- f. King after King came and led Israel into idolatry and rebellion contrary to the Law
- g. For 250 years God waited for Israel to repent, but they refused... so they were carried off into exile by the Assyrians
- h. Judah remained, and some of her kings loved God... but the people continued to rebel; God waited for 250 more years for them to repent, but they refused... so they were carried off into exile by the Babylonians
- i. 70 years later, Ezra & Nehemiah led some Jews back into the Promised Land, but they were soon breaking the covenant as well
- j. 600 more years of Jewish history passed, and not once did anyone prove that righteousness could be gained by the Law

This is a full and comprehensive history... the Law cannot make a sinner righteous; all it can do is reveal the deep roots of sin entangled around his heart

4. The Law speaks to Jews as “under the Law”... but the whole world learns the lesson

- a. words spoken to one person in history... everyone hears its message

b. Jesus spoke this way also

***Matthew 22:31 “... have you not read what God said TO YOU: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’”***

God spoke those words to Moses from the flames of the burning bush... yet in Jesus’ mind, those words were spoken to the whole Jewish nation... “Haven’t you read what God said TO YOU?”

In the same way, the law spoke to the Jewish nation, but the message was for the whole world

And what is the message: The whole world lies under the power of sin and is in danger of condemnation on Judgment Day, since no works of the Law will ever justify anyone.

5. Sin is the same in everyone... everyone needs the same salvation

***Romans 3:22 “There is no difference...!!!”***

Now, some arrogant Gentile nation might argue, “Well that’s just the Jews! Give us Gentiles a chance, and we’ll obey the Law!”

Answer: “No you won’t! The Jews were not chosen because they were any better or worse, but all sinful humanity would rebel against the Law!”

AND:

***Romans 1:18 “The wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...”***

Gentiles are truth suppressors & twisters just like Jews...

E. Paul’s Conclusion: Every Mouth Closed, The Whole World Held Accountable to God

***Vs. 19 “...so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.”***

1. The Prosecutor completes his case
2. Gentiles have innate knowledge of God in creation & internal law BUT they suppress it, twist it, and rebel against it

3. Jews have written knowledge of God in the Law BUT they suppress it, twist it, and rebel against it
4. Result: total silence on Judgment Day
  - a. Why silence? Because it's all true

***Romans 2:2 “Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.”***

***Daniel 7:10 “The court was seated and the books were opened...”***

- b. Stunned silence, like in Revelation

***Revelation 8:1 “When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”***

- c. Silence of acknowledgment of guilt

***Job 9:2-3 “Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God? Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand.”***

IV. “Brothers, what shall we do?”

A. What is Removed?

1. Confidence that Judgment Day will be a light affair:

***Romans 2:16 “On that day, God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ...”***

2. Confidence in self-righteousness:

***Romans 3:9 “There is no one righteous, not even one...”***

3. Confidence in human efforts to attain righteousness:

***Romans 3:11 “...no one who seeks God, no not one”***

***Romans 3:20 “...by works of the law, no flesh shall be justified.”***

4. Confidence in my basic goodness

***Romans 3:12 “There is no one who does good... not even one.”***

Effect of Romans 1:18-3:20: Total rejection of my own righteousness... I have nothing to cover me on judgment day... sin reaches deeply in my heart and causes me at my most basic level to hate God, to rebel against Him, to twist His truth, to live for my own pleasures... I have no remedy in myself

Is it removed??? Are you ready for grace? The test of silence:

***Job 9:2-3 “Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God? Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand.”***

***Job 40:4 “I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.”***

***Job 42:5-6 “My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”***

All self-confidence gone, total silence before God, acknowledgment of sinfulness & guilt before God... repentance from all our evil thoughts and evil ways

Now, we're ready for the only hope that remains!!

B. What Remains? Mercy!!!

***Romans 11:32 “God has bound all men over to disobedience in order that he may have mercy on them all.”***

***Read Romans 3:21-25 “But now, a righteousness from God, apart from Law, has been made known...”***

1. A righteousness not my own that will survive the Judgment of God

Illus. An asbestos robe!!!

2. Full atonement for my sin before God
3. Full removal of the wrath of God
4. Full restoration of my relationship with God