

Date : 22 September 2024
Theme : Make your election sure
Topic : How God feels about our sinfulness
Key Passage: *Romans 3:9-18*
Key Verse : *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." Romans 3:10, 11*

Introduction

The general theme of *Romans* is the revelation of God's righteousness in His plan of salvation (= gospel). Paul, the author, wrote with authority, as a true servant of the gospel because:

- He had prayed...*without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers... Romans 1:9*
- He was obligated (in debt) to give them the gospel. *Romans 1:14*
(he was charged by God to share the gospel with unbelievers in order to discharge his debt).
 - Why was Paul eager to preach the gospel in Rome?
Rome, capital of the Roman Empire: Toughest place in the known world, flagrant depravity. The most idolatrous, immoral, incestuous place then. It did not matter what deviant lifestyle there was, Paul knew that the capital city needed to hear the gospel. It was powerful to overcome any sinful lifestyle.
- He was confident of the gospel's power
The gospel is the power of God for salvation.

1. What must we be saved from?

a) The condemnation of the godless *Romans 1*

- God's wrath is upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.
The consequence for the penalty of sin is eternal death.
- God's anger is provoked when men deny His existence. He cannot be treated as if He does not exist.
- His goodness and patience should lead men to repentance.
- Understand the extent to which men have sinned against Him.
We incur His wrath when we refuse to glorify Him as God and to give Him honour, but instead changed His glory with corruptible objects to be worshipped, yet remained oblivious to the dire consequences for rejecting God.
- Men declined into darkness when God gave them up. They knew they would end up in hell, the place of torment, as they continued to desecrate God's Name.

b) The Judgement of God on the moralist and religious Jews *Romans 2*

- God delays His judgement for men to repent
(opposite of repentance is hardening = arteriosclerosis = hardening of blood vessels).
- God judges men's deeds *Romans 2:6 -10*
 - Those who seek His glory, honour and immortality (= incorruption) gain eternal life.
 - Those who are self-seeking and self-serving receive wrath and anger.

The moralist and the religious Jews are equally, if not more guilty, because they know the truth but do not do the truth. They have a false security in their identity as Jews, are circumcised and they possess the law of God.

2. Four objections raised / answered to show mankind is condemned *Romans 3:1-9*

Q1. What advantage does a Jew have?

Is the Jew disadvantaged by the fact that he knows the law and is accountable for this? (Compared to the non-Jew who is untutored in the Law)?

- So, as a Christian, am I disadvantaged in the Judgement for knowing the law and is held to a higher standard of responsibility on the Day?
- Christians are those who have a covenant relationship with God, but when they break it, God will be faithful to keep His part of the covenant by carrying out the terms (which calls for punishments. 2 *Timothy 2:1-13* God cannot deny Himself).
- Was there any favour for the Jews? Were they not a special people to God in *Deuteronomy 28:9*?
Deuteronomy 28:9 is conditional on obedience. God's covenant and promise of inheritance do not guarantee escape from Judgement.

Q2. Does the unbelief of the Jews cancel God's faithfulness *Romans 3:3*?

Is God being unrighteous to visit us with His wrath. *Romans 3:5*

A2: It is no new thing for there have always been some who will reject God's revelation. Man's unfaithfulness does not invalidate God's faithfulness.

Q3. If our sin commends His righteousness, how can He judge us? *Romans 3:8*. If man's sins commend God's grace extended to us and bring glory to God, why should I be judged?

A3: God is in control everything. Even my evil will ultimately demonstrate His righteousness. (eg. David's sin vindicated God's justice. All sins will do the same).

Q4. Are the Jews disadvantaged compared to Gentiles?

A4: Why not?

Because the same charge is laid on both Jews and Gentiles.

The charge of sin is "missing" the mark". These is none righteous, based on "as it is written". *Psalms 14:1-3* state 3 points (see list in *Romans 3:10-18*):

- General sin *Romans 3:11-12*
- Specific sin *Romans 3:13-15*
- Root cause *Romans 3:16-18*

Conclusion:

The above condemns those who are labouring under the effects of sin for unrighteousness cannot be overcome by human effort. The sinner is helpless.

Therefore, he needs God's mercy and kindness that will lead him to repentance and faith in God.

3. God's grief for His created and chosen ones do not fulfill His purpose.

Romans 3:10-18 is written in poetry (Paul is quoting from the *Psalms* and *Isaiah*).

It expresses God's deep feelings with man's treatment and response to Him.

He had earlier said what He was looking for from people He had created and chosen. He was looking for people who would seek Him, His glory, honour and immortality. His wrath is on the godless who had treated Him as if He did not exist. Now He expressed grief over a lack of godly people who would seek Him.

What is God looking for?

a) Godly People

i) People who value righteousness; but He found none. (example: God sent the flood in the days of Noah. Evil was so pervasive then that God saw no way out but to mete out His punishment).

ii) People who understand Him

Jeremiah 9:24 says God delights in people who understand Him and what is on His heart. Those who want to understand God in this manner must pursue this as a priority. This is the one thing Paul always prayed for believers in every city he wrote to. (To the Colossians: they might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding *Colossians 1:9*).

iii) Seek Him.

Matthew 6:33 says God wants us to seek His Kingdom first (as priority) and His righteousness. Such people make time to do so. His promise is that those who seek will find Him.

iv) Does good.

Our good works glorify our Father in heaven. Evil deeds will be judged. Our Lord Jesus says that every good tree yields good fruit. The kind of fruit confirms what kind of 'tree' we are.

v) Fulfils God's purpose.

People who are useful are not turned aside. Usefulness to God is related to God's purpose for our lives. God has clearly assigned His purpose for each one. (King David was such a person, he fulfilled God's purpose for him in his generation).

b) Godly speech

In speech, God desires that we put aside evil communication.

(i) Cruelty

- Throats as an "open sepulchre" (a Jewish expression) speaks of the foul odour of death that exhales from them. False and misleading teachings lead people to hell.
- Poison of asps speaks of venomous speech that poisons the truth in the minds of those who lack understanding. God haters produce hatred against God and they poison the minds of ignorant people.

(ii) Cheating

Tongues which use deceit and lies to cover up the truth.

(example, deception to cover up a cheating behaviour like adultery)

Every deception and false teaching misrepresent God and cause enmity against Him.

(iii) Cursing

Blaspheming His holy Name. Using expletives for expressing anger is common even among those who name the name of Christ. Foul language and filthy communication often arise from a heart full of it.

c) Godly foresight

This is the ability to foresee the consequence of sin: destruction and misery. Lack of peace. All slaves of sin will experience them. Unfortunately, most people, even Christians, underestimate the severity of the consequences and they do not see God as a God of judgement.

d) Godly fear

The lack of a fear of God is the cause of ungodliness

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Because everyone must give an account for the things done in the body, every Christian must work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

Application:**What needs to change?**

1. Are Christians better than unbelievers?

- Are we more deserving of God's grace?

We are all under sin, guilty before God.

- Are we unfairly penalised for sin?

(Eg When a Christian commits adultery it is serious, but when a non-believer does it, it seems a trivial matter).

All are under the guilt of sin and under condemnation.

2. The Charges against us?

No understanding about how a Holy God feels about sin. *Psalms 14:1-3*

2.1 To God, evil communication is:

(i) Cruel

Throats an "open sepulchre" (a Jewish expression) which speaks of the odour of death.

Poison of asps (venomous speech) that poisons people's minds against God.

(ii) Cheating

Tongues using deceit and lies to cover up the truth.

(example, to cover up a cheating behaviour like adultery)

(iii) Cursing

Blaspheming His holy Name. Using expletives for expressing anger is common even among those who name the name of Christ.

2.2 Consequence? Very few Christians think of the future consequences for disobedience.

Destruction and misery. Lack of peace. All slaves of sin will experience them.

2.3 The Cause?

No fear of God. Our faulty thinking is that God will not penalise sin.