Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Guilt of All Men, Part 2
Scripture: Romans 3:12-20
Code: 45-27

Look with me in your Bible at the third chapter of Romans again and may I read for your hearing verses 9 through 20 as a setting for our message. Paul writes: "What then, are we better? No, in no way for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is one that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher, with their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and miser are in their ways and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law in order that every mouth may be stopped and the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Paul here is talking about sin and guilt and holding every human being in the world responsible before God as guilty. We've entitled this passage, "The guilt of all men."

Just by way of introduction, in Greek mythology there was a king of the Estruscans by the name of Mizentius(?). Mizentius was known by his contemporaries as a detestable cruel fearful man. It is said by the ancients that no torture which entered into his cruel mind was too horrible to gratify his vengeance. He would do anything.

One of his methods of punishment was hard to imagine. He would tie a living person to a dead person, hand to hand, face to face, lip to lip and leave the person alive in that wretched condition until finally he died in that terrible embrace.

Virgil gives us an interesting account of this practice in the Aeneid so we can somewhat substantiate it historically. And some people even believe it is to that very cruel practice to which the Apostle Paul refers in Romans 7 when he says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," seeing himself as a new living creature in Christ and yet facetoface with that old sinful part of him.

Now whether or not in Romans 7 Paul actually had in mind this incredible practice, we don't really know. But we do know that when he cried out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from

the body of this death, he was crying for deliverance from sin. He was crying for deliverance from the unholy and impure passions and appetites which had ruled his body for so long and would still had a residual power in some cases over him. Paul saw sin as a foul polluting reality, offensive to be something that you deeply desired to get rid of.

Now if sin is such a fearful and horrifying thing to the Apostle Paul, imagine what it is to God Himself who is utterly and totally holy. If you'd like to know what God feels about sin, and how He reacts to it and how He describes it, all you need do is look at Romans chapter 3 and the passage we just read. For in this passage more than any other single passage in the Scripture, we have the bringing together of the statements of God regarding the sin of man. It is a composite divine definition and description of the sinfulness of man and his utter inability to do anything about it.

Now remember what I told you last week that as we approach the section that closes Paul's message on sin in Romans, we find ourselves in a courtroom setting and all men were brought, as it were, before the judgment bar of God. God is seated behind the bench as the divine judge who is going to render a verdict in the case of every man. This is Paul's final effort to show the reader the utter sinfulness of men and his climactic argument in showing the sinfulness of man is to use the very Word of God. And so, this is filled with Old Testament Scriptures. And so as we said last time, Paul has already showed us how creation points to the sinfulness of man, how reason points to the sinfulness of man, how history points to the sinfulness of man, how conscience points to the sinfulness of man. He's even talked about how the law points to the sinfulness of man. And now he will show us how Scripture verifies the fact that all the world is guilty before God. And this is where the gospel begins, as we've been saying. Before you can come to know God, you must realize you're a sinner and then you can hear the message of a Savior.

Now remember last time we began with this trial. And the first thing in a trial is the arraignment, verse 9. "What then," Paul says, "are we better?" And we told you the "we" here has reference most likely to Paul and the Romans who were Christians. He has already condemned the Jews, he's already condemned the Gentiles as sinners and now he says, in effect, that even those who are Christians are not Christians because they're not sinners, they're not really in themselves any better than anybody else, we are all sinners. We've already proven, he says in verse 9, that the Jews and the Gentiles are sinners and we must be included in that as well so that all are under sin. Believers by their human nature are no better than the rest. We're not anything different, we are just like the rest. We are all under sin.

The whole human race, you see, has inherited the legacy of Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve fell in sin, they produced a line of sinners that was only broken in the birth of Jesus Christ who in a very real sense bypassed the curse by being born of a virgin conceived by the Holy Spirit.

I read kind of an interesting thing this week. I don't usually read articles on rats, but this was somewhat interesting. And it was telling about rats and how rats multiply. And this was staggering to me. Two rats can reproduce if none of them in the process die 359 million rats in three years. So, check your ivy, folks, you never know what's going on in there. You may have an army march out of there some day. There's very little question as far as animals are concerned that rats are probably the most disease carrying animal. But imagine two rats in three years producing 359 million descendants, all of them disease bearing. And you might have a little idea of what Adam and Eve did. They produced millions and millions, yes billions and billions of offspring who carry the disease of sin. And none of us escapes, that is the arraignment in verse 9.

We moved then in our last study to the indictment in verses 10 to 17, the indictment is in verses 10 to 17 and I told you here you have the specific indictment. God specifically naming the manifestation of sin characteristic of men. It is a collection of Old Testament quotes. This is a rather common rabbinic style of teaching. The rabbis called it a "carax(?)" which literally means to string pearls. And they would string together the pearls, as it were, of wisdom or the truth of God. And that is in very rabbinic fashion that Paul does this, stringing together the pearls of God's statements relative to sin. There are 13 counts in the indictment against men. And you'll know it in verse 10, it begins with the statement, "And as it is written..." In other words, that is a familiar way to introduce quotes from the Old Testament.

Now the 13 indictment counts are divided into three categories. First is character, then is conversation, then is conduct. If this were a medical doctor rather than a theologian and an apostle, we might say that when man is taken in for his exam it begins with Xrays. And the Xray reveals what's inside. And that's where Paul begins the analysis of the sinfulness of man with an Xray to show us his character. Then there is an inspection of his mouth and throat and finally a full physical examination. The result of which is that man is diseased in every part.

Now Paul begins with the character of man in verses 10 to 12, starting from inside. And there are six negatives to describe man, six elements of the 13 indictments appear here. First of all, there is none righteous, no not one. And that is from Psalm 14 as we noted last time. And that simply says man is evil, there's none righteous, no not one. In character, he is evil. He is not good, he is bad...at the very core he is bad.

Secondly, he says there is none that understands. He is not only evil, he's ignorant. He is not only bad but he doesn't understand good. He cannot perceive it. And that again is from Psalm 14.

Then in verse 11 is the third element of the indictment, there is none that seeketh after God. And again that appears in Psalm 14. And that means man is not only bad and ignorant but he's rebellious. It would be better if he was just bad and ignorant and willing, but he's bad and ignorant and unwilling and does not seek God.

And then it says in verse 12, they are all gone out of the way. Not only is he rebellious, he is deviated, he is perverted. And the perversion runs from his selfwill. We might even say he is proud and chooses his own course rather than the way of God. So man is evil, and ignorant and rebellious and deviated.

Fifthly, and this is where we stopped last time, he is useless. They are together literally all together become useless. Unprofitable, says the Authorized. And it really carries two ideas. It is the basic thought of useless but it is useless due to its corruption. It is useless because it's not useful anymore, it has so deteriorated, it is so been corrupted, it's lost its significant use. The Hebrew equivalent, by the way, of the word "unprofitable" is used of milk that has gone sour. And milk that has gone sour is useless. The human race is rancid. The human race has gone sour. It has been corrupted and consequently it is useless. It is, if you will, like branches without fruit, John 15. It is like salt without savor, Matthew chapter 7. Man is useless, he is worthless. He serves no divine purpose. So if you will with Paul to the Xray and you read what he takes of the character of man, you find that man is evil, ignorant, rebellious, deviated and useless to the purposes of God. The Greek term basically means he is good for nothing. In fact, the very same word is used, interestingly enough, in Homer's Odyssey, ancient writing, and he uses it for the senseless laughter of a moron. That's about the value of man. He's about as useless as the senseless laughter of a moron.

I might add also that this statement in Psalm 14:3 adds that man is stinking...or filthy, putrid and thus helps us to understand why he is so useless. He is like milk gone sour. He is like food gone bad that is rancid and putrid and filthy and stinking and he has no value other than to be thrown away. And that is why the Bible tells us that such a man is like a branch who bears no fruit and is thrown in the fire because there's no other thing to do with him than to burn him. And the same occurs to the salt without its savor, it is utterly useless and thrown away. So in a very real sense, hell and eternal punishment reflects the discarding of useless human beings, useless to the purposes of God.

The sixth element of the indictment appears also in this same verse and it is a bracket that brackets these first elements of the indictment because it is almost identical to the first one. In verse 10 it says there is none righteous, no not one. And now in verse 12 it says there is none that doeth good, no not one. And that's basically saying the same thing. Taking it a step further, there is not anyone who is good so there is no one who does good. The idea of good here, chrestoteshas to do with moral goodness. There is no real goodness. There is no eternal goodness. There's no Godglorifying goodness. There's no genuine holiness. As we've been trying to point out to you, we're not saying that man does not do some human good, that there's not some relative good done on a human scale, but ultimately it is not the goodness of God. It does not advance the Kingdom.

So, the sum of man's character is just very clear as you look at it, man is bad, he is ignorant, he is rebellious, he is deviated, he is useless, and he cannot do anything but what is evil.

On one Saturday afternoon in Rukon(?) Glen which is outside of Glasgow, Scotland, it was a lovely summer day and there was a faithful Christian man walking through the park and he tucked in his pocket a Bible. Some young people were cavorting and frolicking around the park and having a great time. And they wanted their picture taken. And so they stopped this stranger to them and they said, "Sir, would you take our portrait, our photograph?" And they were all gathered around to await his answer and he said, "Oh, I already have it." And they looked at him somewhat quizzically and said, "What do you mean you have it? When did you take it?" He said, "Oh, it's right here in my pocket." And he took out his New Testament and he read this to them, "There's none righteous, no not one, there's none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God, they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." And he said, "That is your photograph."

Startling, but true...and then proceeded to present to them the gospel of Jesus Christ. We should be so clever. That is the photograph of man. Now his character will inevitably manifest itself in his conversation. Verse 13, and this is the first place that he goes to show the demonstration of character. You remember what our Lord taught us in our chapter in Matthew 12, "Out of the abundance of the heart...what happens?...the mouth speaks." Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man, Matthew 12:35, out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things. And an evil man, out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. And I say unto you, every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgment, for by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

And you remember at the time we studied that I pointed out to you Matthew 15 verse 18, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and defile the man for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false witness, blasphemies." So the mouth is the first indicator of what is in the heart. And that is exactly where Paul moves in verses 13 and 14 and he quotes, by the way, from Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140 verse 3 and Psalm 10 verse 7.

The revealer he says of the corrupt character is the mouth. And I think James really supports this. In James chapter 3, you're familiar with this, James talks about putting a bit in the horse's mouth to make the horse obey. He talks about how a ship can be guided by a very small helm that turns the ship one way or another. And he says, "Like a small bit that guides a large horse and a small rudder, or helm, that guides a large ship, so a small thing like a tongue can have a great effect." And he talks about a tongue is like a fire, it is a world of iniquity. A tongue among our members defiles the whole body. It sets on fire the course of nature and is set on fire of hell. He says the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. The tongue manifests what's in the heart.

Proverbs 10:32 says, "The mouth of the wicked speaks perverseness." Proverbs 15:2 says, "The mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness." And verse 28 of Proverbs 15 it says, "The mouth of the

wicked poureth out evil things."

So, Paul moves then to the conversation of man and nothing is so revealing of his character as his mouth. Like a master surgeon diagnosing the mouth and the throat, he begins down in the throat and proceeds out. Look at verse 13, this is a most interesting thing. "The throat is an open tomb, the throat is an open grave." Now that's from Psalm 5:9, but that is a most fascinating statement. What is he saying? He is saying that the throat is to the heart as an open grave is to the corpse that is in it. When a body is laid in the ground, it only makes sense to cover it. To leave the casket open and the grave open would only expose to all who came by the filth and the rot of decay to say nothing of the stench. Paul says mankind is like a corpse rotting and it is through his throat that the stench comes to recognition by those around him.

John Trapp(?) years ago said, "It is easy to observe that Paul here making the anatomy of a natural man stands more on the organs of speaking than all other members and shows how his tongue is tipped with fraud, his lips are tainted with venom, his mouth is full of bitterness, his throat is a gaping grave, his tongue is a sword to run men through and his throat as a sepulcher to bury them." No matter whether you see the throat as a tomb for burial or whether you see it as I see it as the place where the stench rises, the picture of Paul's words is vivid. Nothing can be more abominable than an open grave with a rotten body putting out its staggering and unbearable smell.

By the way, the word here for open is a perfect participle, indicating that it stays open. It just stays open. The sum of what he's saying, very simply, is man's soul is dead as Paul said in Ephesians 2, dead in trespasses and sin, and the putrid stinking decaying corpse emits a foul and filthy odor that comes through the throat in the form of words. All you have to do is listen to what people say to know whether man is depraved.

Then there's another, an eighth element in the indictment that occurs here. It says moving from the throat, "With their tongues," verse 13, now we come to the throat to the tongue, "they have used deceit." The tense again here indicates a life habit, dolioois a word that has as a root idea a fishhook and that's deceit. You think you're going to bite on a healthy meal and you're caught and you die becoming someone else's meal.

And that's what Paul says about mankind. And see if it isn't so. You take a man at his word, you trust a man at his word, you take him at face value and you are hooked for the kill because men don't tell the truth. Have you found that to be true in your business? Have you found that to be true in your relationships with unbelievers? It is true.

I'll never forget picking up the L.A. TIMES when I was a seminary student and I read of a terrible crime that was committed in East Los Angeles. There was a sidewalk hooker who was doing her, applying her trade on the sidewalk and a fellow from an affluent part of Los Angeles was over there

looking for some evening's entertainment. And he saw this girl and so he pulled to the curb and picked her up.

They drove a little while and he decided to stop and make advances to her, which he proceeded to do. And he took her into his arms and kissed her and little did he know that she had between her teeth a razor blade with which she proceeded to slice off his lips. An unimagineable event. I doubt whether you'd have to convince him that his sins had found him out.

But I've often thought about how that is a very graphic description of what Paul really says here. If you trust the mouth of man you will find yourself hooked for the kill, sliced, if you will. You see, in Psalm 54..or, 57 verse 4 it says, "Their teeth are spears and arrows," their teeth are razor blades, if you will. Psalm 36:3, "The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit." And then it says it in Psalm 52:2, "Like a sharp razor working deceitfully." You think you're going to get a kiss, but you don't.

Isaiah chapter 59, I think, among other passages speaks to this same issue. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you that He will not hear, for your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity, your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness."

I think Jeremiah saw the same manifestation of the sinfulness of man through his mouth. Chapter 9 verse 3 he said, "And they bend their tongues like bows for lies, they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth, they proceed from evil to evil. They know not me, saith the Lord, take heed everyone of his neighbor, trust not in any brother." Don't trust them because you can't believe what they say. "For every brother will utterly subplant and every neighbor will walk with slanders and they will deceive everyone his neighbor and will not speak the truth. They have taught their tongue to speak lies." That's true. People don't tell you the truth. They say whatever is expedient to gain their end, and that is a revelation of the filthy rotten corpse inside. Man is evil.

And so, from the throat to the tongue and then to the under part of the lips, verse 13. "The poison of asps is under their lips." They seek to draw you near to lure you near and then to destroy you by releasing their concealed poison. One writer describing this phenomena of asps said, "The fangs of such a deadly snake ordinarily lie folded back in the upper jaw, but when the snake throws his head to strike, these hollow fangs drop down and when the snake bites the fangs press a sac of deadly poison hidden under the lips injecting venom into the victim." Their words may appear flattering and subtle, but then they strike.

About two weeks ago a friend of mine told me that his neighbor had found a little baby rattler and he decided to keep it as a pet. No one has to my knowledge, or to his, been successful in having a pet rattle snake...but this fellow thought he would try it. And he played with it and kept it around the

house until it grew and then all of a sudden, even though it was still somewhat small, it disappeared in the house and he couldn't find it. And it stayed in seclusion, perhaps hibernating for months and months. And by the time it was ready to reappear it had grown substantially. And one day he reached behind a table to get something that he dropped and when he shockingly tore his hand out, attached to it was a rattler...sinking his fangs into him.

You can't tame man, either. In the end he will revert to his nature and he will dig his fangs and pump his poison to gain his own ends. Man is poisonous.

I think about David in this regard, 2 Samuel chapter 11. And I think about the incredible evening that Uriah spent when David wined and dined him, you remember that? David was up on his roof and he saw Bathsheba taking a sunbath. Man, he got really excited about this lady and figured since he was the king he could have any lady he wanted. And she was the one he wanted. He had a real problem with that area, by the way. And so he developed a strategy and you know the story. But the really amazing part is here was David, God's king, and he brings Uriah her husband in and he wines him and dines him and leads him to believe he's his friend and leads him out to be slaughtered.

Do you remember the woman with the flattering lips in Proverbs? Who leads men down to Sheol to death. And the worse kiss of venom in all of history was the kiss of Judas. It interests me, too, to remind you that Jesus called the Pharisees a generation or a brood of vipers because they were so poisonous to the people they infected. This is man. Then you hear some peabrain come along and say, "Man is basically good." No he's not. Man is not basically good. Man is wretched. And I'm not talking about a guy down the street, I'm talking about us. And every once in a while we see that, don't we? Even when we're redeemed.

Well, we start at the throat, the tongue, the underside of the lips and then come to the outside, the mouth and verse 14. "The mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." That's from Psalm 10 verse 7. Cursing and bitterness. Cursing is just that, ara, means to speak a curse, to speak evil against someone, to curse someone. And, boy, that's so common in our society, isn't it? Cursing, filthy talk one person toward another, cussing somebody out, I mean, it just goes on as a way of life. And then the word bitterness, pikria, means an extreme kind of wickedness that results in evil speaking against God, against men. And the whole idea of cursing and bitterness is just foul, filthy, evil language toward one another.

Psalm 64:3 has a similar idea, it says, "Men wet their tongue like a sword and bend their bows to shoot arrows even bitter words." These are the words of hate and anger and violence. All you really have to do is just listen, I mean, just listen to the world, foul, filthy talk, deceitful talk that rings people in under the guise of trust and then pumps the venom in and takes the victim. The words of bitterness, of anger that curse, the words of filthy, the words of blasphemy, the words of pride, the words of lust, the lewd, lascivious gross talk of sex and fornication and all of those things, the lies, the

deceits, the destruction that comes out of the mouth of people are indicators of the depravity of man. Like an open grave, the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth reveal the stench of a depraved heart.

Then comes a final round of indictments in verse 15.

And as I say, these are obvious to you, very clear. But now he moves to conduct...from character to conversation to conduct. And he talks here about the conduct of individuals and how it manifests the same sinfulness. Verse 15, "Their feet are swift to shed blood." Now you don't have to be genius to figure out that man is basically a murderous individual. We kill our own at a greater rate than any animal. We kill our own constantly. We are murderers, we are killers, whether you're talking about cannibalism, on the one hand, in an aboriginal society such as Eriangia(??) or whether you're talking about mass genocide such as we have seen in the western civilized world. And anything and everything in between, it is clear that men massacre each other.

For example, in the United States since 1900 we have killed twice as many people in private acts of taking a life as have died in all the wars in which we have fought in our entire history. According to Dr. Arnold Barnett of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a baby born in any one of the United States fifty largest cities has about one chance in fifty of being murdered. And, says Dr. Barnett, it is more likely that you will be murdered in your life time than that an American soldier in World War II would have died in combat.

So, peace doesn't solve the problem. Man will massacre man whether in peace or war. And we live in a day today where we see this all around us. We see these mass murders were going through this Freeway Strangler and all of these other Hillside Strangler and the mass murders that just go on an on. You might think that's something new and I think maybe the degree of it may be somewhat new, at least in my life time. It seems a few years ago this was not quite as common. But a lot of it has to do with the rise of homosexuality who are the homosexuals when they get into this kind of thing where they kill, are the kind that will carry it to those extremes.

But if you go back, for example, to 1560 to 1614, that's a long time ago. It is said in history that Countess Ersabet(?) Bottery(?) who was in Hungary was accused of killing, get this, 610 young girls systematically and had all their names written in her diary by her own handwriting. It is said that Chong Sen Chung(?) who is a somewhat famous leader, a bandit really who gained control of the Chinese province of Sheschwan(?) killed some time between 1643 and 1648 40 million people, it makes a piker out of Hitler.

There was an interesting story I read this week about a ship carrying 317 Chinese coolies. It was wrecked in 19...in 1858 on a reef in the South Pacific. The 317 apparently were able to make it to shore. The island appeared to be uninhabited yet plentiful with food. Having no other choice, the crew put the coolies ashore and set out for help in a small boat. When they returned in a rescue

vessel five months later, only one Chinese was still alive and all that was left of the other 316 was a pile of bones and pigtails. They had been eaten by cannibals.

Whether you're talking about cannibalism or mass murder or war, whatever, man massacres himself. Men kill themselves. Man is a murderer. And they're fast at it...shedding blood. That is the history of man. Don't come to me with any nonsense that man is good, he is not good, he is bad. He is a killer.

You say, "Well, I'm not a killer." Well, you're not as bad as you could be. Not all men are as bad as they could be but they're bad. As I said this morning, it's only from bad to worse, some people are just bad but no people are...what?...good. Not as God counts goodness. But we see the mark of man's evil in his desire to shed blood.

Verse 16 takes it even a step further. And this is the twelfth element, really, in the sort of indictment list, "Their feet are swift to shed blood and consequently destruction and misery are in their ways." In other words, they leave a trail of devastation...destruction, suntrimmais a compound word, it means to shatter, to break into bits. It's the idea...it's the devastation of unmitigated cruelty. Men are cruel. They don't just kill, they kill with a sense of cruelty. I think so often, too, about the whole thing of the battered children and all that.

And then it uses the word "misery," which I think is an important word for us to see. It's a word that can mean a lot of things, it can mean distress, it can mean suffering, it can mean wretchedness but basically its abstract meaning is misery. Man in his world leaves a swathe of devastation, destruction, massacre and misery. I mean, the world is miserable, is it not? There's unhappiness and misery. If you don't have murder, you have hate...violence, blood shed, devastation, misery mark all of human history. And that is the conduct of man.

And then thirteenth in the list and the last of the indictments, "The way of peace have they not known." If there's one thing the world never has, what is it? Peace. They never have peace, there's never peace in the world, there's never peace. As Jeremiah said, "They cry peace, peace when there's no peace." Like the false prophets, there's no peace to the wicked. There's only violence and devastation and destruction and yet men keep talking about euphoria and utopia and the day of peace. And when it's all going to finally end and everybody wants to know when it's going to happen, and of course it's never going to happen until Jesus Christ comes. Quarrels, hatred, fights, arguments, animosities, crimes, revolutions, wars.

The other night, my family came down Wednesday night to church and they stopped at MacDonalds. We always go first class. Went into MacDonalds to have a hamburger with the kids before they got here and two men were standing in line and they, I guess, were pushing and shoving to see who could get their Big Mac first. And all of a sudden, one shoved the other and he shoved back and then

the punches started to fly and then the place turned into a kind of a...there was a group of retarded children in there, and they panicked, and there was my wife and she panicked. And there was cursing and filthy language and here was this tremendous sermon illustration. I would have thought it would happen in Burger King where they keep saying, "Have it your way." Men will fight over standing in line for a hamburger because it's in them to do that.

Animosities, arguments, crimes, revolutions, wars, the great commentator of the last century, Haldain, wrote, "The most savaged animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger as man destroys his fellows to satiate his ambition, his revenge or his greed," end quote.

So, Paul indicts man. What a...what a creature man is. Sin has done this. Old Dr. Guthrie wrote a great thing on sin. Let me just share it with you. "Sin is a debt," he said, "a burden, a thief, a sickness, a leprosy, a plague, a poison, a serpent, a sting, everything that man hates, it is...a load of curses and calamities beneath whose crushing most intolerable pressure the whole creation groans. Name me the evil that springs not from this root, the crime that I may not lay at its door, who is the horrey sexton that digs man a grave, who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue, who is the murderess that destroys his life, who is this sorceress that first deceives and then damns his soul? It is sin. Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Who by a more hideous metamorphosis an ovid even fancy changes gentle children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocent children? Who casts the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by divisions in the church rends Christ's seamless robe? It is sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarerite asleep and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who winning smiles on her face, honey flattery on her tongue stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality and when suspicion sleeps, treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair siren is this who seated on a rock by the deadly pool smiles to deceives, sings to lure, kisses to betray and flings her arm around our neck to leap with us into hell? Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne and impels sinners mad as gaddering swine down the precipice into the lake of fire? It is sin."

And so the arraignment and so the indictment. Verse 18 takes us to the third point, the motive. And any good prosecutor is going to come up with a motive. And I really believe in verse 18 you have the key to the whole element of man's sinfulness. Here it is, "There's no fear of God before their eyes." That is why man is what he is. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart there is no fear of God before his eyes," Psalm 36 verse 1. That's man's problem. Now listen carefully cause here's the key. The reason man is so abandoned to sin is because he does not fear God. He does not fear God. And fearing God has both a positive and a negative element and you have to understand both or you won't understand this.

Fearing God on the positive side means to worship and to be in awe of God. And fear of God on the negative side means to be afraid of Him. And when you hear people talk about fearing God simply being the positive, they've left out a very important motive. There must be a healthy respect for God's chastening power. And when men don't fear God's punishment, they will abandon themselves to sinfulness. That's why people become atheists, not because it's logical but because it's the way they can escape their guilt by deciding there's no God, so there's no consequence, there's no fear of God because there is no God, they conclude. And conversely, you see, that is why Proverbs 9;10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of...what?...of wisdom." You will never even begin to be wise unless you fear God. By the fear of the Lord, it says in Proverbs 16:6, a great statement, by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. You see, men depart from evil when they fear God. Why do you think throughout the Old Testament God slew people? Why do you think He punished sin with death? Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira fell dead in front of the church? In order that men might fear God and know that if they did not live in righteousness, they themselves would suffer the same fate. And that's why it tells us in Corinthians that these things happen for examples unto us. You remember our study of Romans 2 when we went into that?

All throughout the Old Testament we had these tremendous acts of God where He moves in destruction and devastation and brings death upon individuals. And at first it seems to us a somewhat whimsical, somewhat arbitrary until we find out that God is doing it so that we would fear Him. It was said of Cornelius that he was a devout man who feared God and so he was a prime candidate for salvation. But unless God's Spirit has worked in the heart, men do not fear God. They have no respect for His holiness, they have no respect for His person, they have no respect for His work, they have no respect for His will, they have no respect for His power.

And it isn't just the idea of fright or panic. It is reverential respect but there's a certain amount of panic and fright in it. There has to be a sense of knowing that if I violate God there are consequences. And fearing like that is the controller of all behavior. I mean, we all do that. We all are, our behavior is controlled basically because we fear consequences. For example, maybe you're mature enough spiritually that you don't need that, you'll just do everything right out of pure love, and that would be the epitome of spirituality. But in my own life, I confess to you that there are sins that I do not commit, there are temptations I do not fall to not because I'm so utterly holy that they don't really push me very far, but because I'm fearful that God will retaliate as He has a right to retaliate and I'd really rather not have the consequences. I mean, some of you may drive 35 in the 35 zone just because you're sanctimonious, others of you may be doing it looking in your rear view mirror because you don't want a ticket. Either way, if it works its work on you, it's good.

The same is true with God. There are times when we respond to God out of the pure love of our hearts. And there are times when we must respond to God out of the fear of His chastening power. And where men have neither, they do not desire God's glory and they do not fear God's punishment,

they have no control over their sinfulness. Do you see that? That's why we've said to you repeatedly for years that the key thing in all of human behavior is to live to the glory of God where you recognize Him and you honor Him and you live in a healthy fear of what may happen when you disobey. And I'm talking about Christians living even under grace because it says in Hebrews that whom the Lord loves, He...what?...He chastens and every son He scourges. We must accept God as God and worship and obey and fear the consequence of our disobedience.

The Old Testament is literally filled with things to force us to that attitude. God was trying to make His people in the Old Testament fear Him. And that's a common thread in the Old Testament. Just go through the Old Testament and see what God did to make the people fear Him. He turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt. He threw Adam and Eve out of the garden. He drowned the whole world, that ought to be some kind of lesson. He sent snakes to bite the Israelites. He swallowed Korah, Dathan and Abiram, He killed Nadab and Abihu, He sent fire from heaven at the call of Elijah and consumed a hundred soldiers. He sent a bear to tear up forty little children. He drowned the entire Egyptian army. He took the life of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. He killed Absalom, David's rebellious son. He used Samson to slaughter thousands and thousands of the Philistines. He repeatedly demanded death.

And you remember the illustration I gave you in the thirteenth chapter of Luke? When the people came to Jesus and they said, "You know, we don't understand why happened the other day. There were 18 people walking down the street and a tower fell on them and killed them all. Were these people worse sinners than everybody else?" And you remember what Jesus said? "You better shape up or the same thing will happen to you." What was He saying? The answer to the question was this is what everybody deserves and it ought to be a warning to you to make sure your life is right.

And then they say, "Well, what about all those Galileans who went down to the temple during the time of the sacrifice and they went in there and they were offering their sacrifice and Pilate sent some men in slaughtered them, cut them up right there while they were worshiping God and their blood was mixed with the blood of the sacrifice. What...how would God let that happen?" And His answer to them was, "You better shape up or the same thing will happen to you."

What was He trying to tell them? He was trying to put some fear in them, wasn't He? Healthy fear. The world has no fear of God. I've asked myself that so many times. How can people do what they do? I mean, how can they be so abandoned to the lust and the filth of the world?

I recently was told of a man in the ministry who has written on the subject of worship who was a leader in the theme of worship. And in his church they were moving him from one office to another office and the folks who were helping discovered in a box every issue of Playboy Magazine since its first issue and pornographic material that was staggering. My reaction to that is, first of all, I don't

know if the man could be a Christian, but secondly, how can a man who is known for leading worship have no fear of God? Neither to positively reverence and honor His holiness or to fear His wrath? But that's how it is with the world. "It is astonishing," says Haldain, "that while they acknowledge there is a God, men live without any fear of His displeasure. They fear a worm of the dust like themselves but disregard the Most High. They are more afraid of man than of God, of man's anger or contempt or ridicule. The fear of man prevents them from doing many things from which they are not restrained by the fear of God. They love not His character, not rendering to it that veneration which is due, they respect not His authority, such is the state of human nature while the heart is unchanged," end quote.

So, you see the sinfulness of man. He is arraigned, he is indicted, his motive is exposed. And finally, the verdict is given in verse 19. This is the verdict. And you want to know something? It's a pretty clear verdict. "Now we...what's the next word?...know." There isn't any doubt. There's no confusion about this, oida, to know absolutely, be sure, be positive. "We know this, that whatever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God."

Now it starts out in that verse by saying whatever things the law says it says to them that are under the law. Who are they? Who is under the law? You want to know the answer to that? Everyone...everyone's under the law. The law here, I think, is the opposite of being under grace, another familiar Pauline phrase. People who are under grace are the redeemed people, people who are under law are the unredeemed. Anybody unredeemed is under obligation to justify himself by keeping the whole law, right? That's his only hope, and of course he can't do it. But the whole world is under obligation to the law of God. That's why God can ultimately condemn them...the whole world. The Jew is under obligation to the written law. The Gentile is under obligation to the law written in his heart and his conscience. That's why Romans 2 verse 11 is so important, "There's no respect of persons with God, for as many as have sinned without law will perish without law, that is written law, as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law, for when the Gentiles who have not the written law do by nature the things contained in the law they having not the law are a law unto themselves who show the work of the law written in their hearts." The Jews have the written law, written externally. The Gentiles have the written law, written internally. All are under the law. So he's really taking everybody. All unregenerate people are under the law of God. And whatever that law says it says to the people who are under its authority, and so everybody's under it. Everybody in the world is obligated to the law of God. Everybody who lives on the face of the earth is obligated to God's standards. God is the creator, God is the sustainer, God is the authority in the universe, He is the sovereign, He is the Lord, He calls the shots, He makes the rules, and every human being living on the face of the earth is under obligation to that law.

Now, the verdict then is since every man in the world is under obligation to the law and every man in the world is evil, every mouth is stopped. What does that mean? No defense. In this particular

tribunal there's nothing to say, there's not a word to say to defend yourself. The only response is dead silence. Every mouth is stopped. The defense has no defense. The defense rests before the defense says anything because there is no defense. It is a dramatic fearful scene...reminiscent of the same silence that occurred in Revelation chapter 8 when the awesome judgment began to fall. The effect of overwhelming evidence is utter silence. There's nothing to say. Are you going to stand up and defend men? Are you going to say, no, no, no, man is basically good? No, no, man doesn't sin with his mouth, oh no, man is not murderous, man is not evil, he's not deceitful. Are you going to say that? Why of course there's peace...are you going to try to defend men? There's nothing to say. Therefore the verdict, all the world stands guilty before God.

And so, Paul has come all the way to the climax of his statement on sin. Everybody is guilty. You say, "Well, now wait a minute. Some of those people living under the law, they might have lived up to the law, right? This is what the Armenian theologian says, "Why some of them might have been righteous. They might have lived under God's law and kept all of the rules." Oh, we knew somebody would say that. The Lord knew somebody would say, "Well yes, but there's this one guy who never sinned." Or, "There are these folks and I know they've never sinned," so he just throws in verse 20, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight for the only thing the law can do is show you sin." There's nobody that's going to make it by keeping the law. Every man on the face of the earth, now mark this, is in obligation to keep God's law but nobody on the face of the earth can do it. Now that puts man in an impossible situation. He is an utter sinner, he is obligated to keep God's law and he can't. That's the human dilemma.

The solution, verse 21 says, is apart from the law. And where is it? In verse 22, it's by faith in...whom?...Jesus Christ. We're going to get into that in our next study.

So, listen carefully. The sinfulness of man is proven every which way, including by Scripture. And the Psalmist was right in Psalm 130 verse 3 when he said, "If thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" Nobody could, the whole world is guilty, everyone is silent, there's nothing to say, we're all under obligation to God's law because He's the sovereign and none of us can keep the deeds of the law, all the law can do is show us our evil and it leaves us stuck in that position. No man is living a righteous life. That's clear.

The same truth, I think, is in Galatians 3:22, "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin in order that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." The Scripture concludes all under sin so that in your hopelessness you'll believe in Jesus Christ and take Him in. And He can do what the law could never do, what you in your flesh could never do.

There was a young lady of 22 years old who died in a hospital in Cincinati. She had once possessed an enviable share of beauty, been greatly sought after for her charm, the beauty of her face. But she had fallen to become a prostitute. Highly educated, accomplished in manners, she spent her life in

shame, friendless. She finally died. As they were going through her effects in this hospital in Cincinati, they found a poem that she had written. The name of it was "Beautiful Snow." And I think it's perhaps an insightful look at a sinful heart.

She wrote this, it appeared in a national magazine:

Oh the snow, the beautiful snow, filling the sky and the earth below, over the housetops, over the street, over the heads of the people you meet. Dancing, flirting, skimming along, beautiful snow, it can do nothing wrong. Flying to kiss a fair lady's cheek, clinging to lips in frolicsome freak. Beautiful snow, from the heavens above, pure as an angel, gentle as love. Once I was pure as the snow, but I fell, fell like the snowflakes from heaven to hell. Fell to be trampled as filth in the street, fell to be scoffed, to be spat on and beat. Pleading, cursing, dreading to die, selling my soul to whoever would buy. Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread, hating the living and fearing the dead. Merciful God I have fallen so low, and once I was like the beautiful snow. How strange it should be that this beautiful snow should fall on a sinner with nowhere to go. How strange it should be when night comes again, if the snow and the ice struck my desperate brain. Fainting, freezing, dying alone, too wicked for prayer, too weak for a moan. To be heard in the streets of the crazy town gone mad in the joy of the snow coming down. To lie and to die in my terrible woe, with a bed and a shroud of the beautiful snow.

And that's how it ended. Somebody added another stanza. "Helpless and foul as the trampled snow; sinner, despair not, Christ stoopeth low to rescue the soul that is lost in its sin and raise it to life and enjoyment again. Groaning, bleeding, dying for thee, the crucified hung made a curse on the tree, His accents of mercy fall soft on thine ear, is there mercy for me, will He heed my prayer? O God, in the stream that for sinners doth flow, wash me and I shall be...what?...whiter than snow." Let's pray.

Thank You, our Father, again for Your Word, for our fellowship tonight. We pray for that one in our midst who needs to be washed whiter than snow, for that one who is aware perhaps more than ever before of his or her sinfulness and inability to keep Your law. We pray that they would come to Jesus Christ who fulfilled all of the law, who paid our penalty that we might be forgiven. Do Your work in that heart.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment. If you would like to invite Jesus Christ into your life tonight, that would be such a glorious thing. You can do it right where you sit in the silence of this moment, confess your sins and He'll save you, He'll do what you could never do for yourself.

Father, I pray that when we're dismissed You'll bring those that need to come, bring those who need to be washed clean, who need to be made as white as snow that they may not live one day longer in the bondage of sin, sentenced under the law to death. Help us, Lord, too, to see men as lost, to take to them the message that they can be found in Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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