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“We know that what thing soever 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” (Romans 3:19).

Sin Exposed

Central Truth: all individuals without Christ are guilty before God.

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Topic: Law: Of God; Sin: Of Men.

One of the most fearful statements in the Bible is this: God has revealed His law in order *“that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”* (Romans 3:19).

Does someone object to such a universal condemnation of the human race? Then let him read Romans 1, 2, and 3. The section deals with the doctrine of condemnation (Romans 1:19 — 3:20). It falls into three logical divisions. (1) Gentiles are sinners against God (Romans 1:18-32). (2) Jews are sinners against God (Romans 2:1 — 3:8). (3) All are sinners against God (Romans 3:9-20). That settles the issue as far as God is concerned.

Does God reveal our sin that He may shame us and punish us? Not at all. There is a motive of grace in that revelation. *“The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe”* (Galatians 3:22). *“God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all”* (Romans 11:32). God reveals our sin that we may see it as exceeding sinful (Romans 7:13) and turn from it to Jesus Christ. He condemns that He may forgive. It is His wounding us which heals us.

We all have sinned. A sinner is helpless to save himself. God has offered hope to hopeless sinners by offering salvation freely to all who trust Jesus. Here is the heart of the Christian gospel.

I. GENTILES ARE SINNERS (Romans 1:18-32)

A. The wrath of God is against them (verse 18). That does not mean that God is mad at sinners, as humans get angry. The wrath of God means His settled opposition against sin which will issue in a just judgment. God's wrath is not a figment of man's imagination. It is being revealed from heaven now.

What arouses the wrath of God? Every form of impiety, injustice, or godless wickedness of men is met with the wrath of God. That conduct hinders the progress of truth and stifles the purpose of God to promote holiness in men. When it rises in resistance to God, He responds in wrath. *“Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil”* (Romans 2:8, 9). *“He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:36).

B. The revelation of God is for them (verses 19, 20). God is not unjust in judging sinners. His invisible attributes have been clearly revealed since the creation of the earth. His work in the material universe reveals His eternal power and divine nature. What the written law requires the unwritten revelation in the heart reveals (Romans 2:15). *“The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory”* (Psalm 97:6). *“He left not himself without witness, in that he . . . gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness”* (Acts 14: 17). Christian missions does not attempt to tell people there is a God but to tell the truth about the God who is. God-consciousness is universal.

C. The rejection of God was by them (verses 21-23). Read these fateful words: *“When they knew God, they glorified him not as God . . . ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . . . They became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image.”* That is the problem. God revealed the truth about himself, but men refused to accept that truth and changed it into a lie. No wonder the wrath of God is against them! The perversion of the revelation of God deserves the most severe judgment. Man can blame no one but himself. God's revelation was right; man made it wrong. That is why missionary evangelism is the work of the saints in all generations of human history.

D. The judgment of God is upon them (verses 24-32). In three great acts of abandoning man to the consequences of his sin, God showed His wrath.

(1) God judges by sensual license (verses 24, 25). Sexual vice is the judgment of God on sin. Rejecting the principles of a holy God, man became enslaved by his lusts. God let him continue in that course and reap the

harvest of immorality.

(2) God judges by sexual perversion (verses 26, 27). Homosexuality is not an alternate lifestyle; it is a direct judgment of God upon the perversion of the natural desires by wicked people. Those are the “*vile affections*” (shameful, disgraceful, and dishonorable passions) to which God surrendered sinners. Perversion is the consequence of rejecting God.

(3) God judges by spiritual reprobation (verses 28-32). Human beings became slaves to their degenerate minds and practiced things which were indecent. (See the list in Romans 1:29-31.) Though they knew that God would judge such a lifestyle, they practiced it and encouraged others to follow it also. They are the people who walk “*in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*” (Ephesians 4:17-19).

Do you agree that the wrath of God should be against such people?

II. THE JEWS ARE SINNERS (Romans 2:1 — 3:8)

A. Unbelieving Jews are under the judgment of God (Romans 2:1-16). Being a descendant of Abraham means nothing if there is no personal faith in Jesus as Messiah (Romans 9:6-8). Not Abraham's blood in the veins but Abraham's faith in the heart determines the true Israel of God. “*He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*” (John 3:18).

Romans 2:1-15 says three things about the judgment of God. (1) His judgment is impartial (verses 1-5). Jew and Gentile stand equally before God on that issue. (2) His judgment is just (verses 6-10). One receives exactly what he deserves. (3) His judgment is without respect of persons (verses 11-15). “*There is no respect of persons with God*” means that God has no favorites, shows no partiality, and pays no attention to the world's distinctions between people. Think about the solemn implication of that!

B. Unbelieving Jews are dependent on self-righteousness (Romans 2:17-24). Here is a person who calls himself a Jew, feels secure in the law, boasts of belonging to God, knows what God wants, distinguishes between good and evil, and has been taught the law. He considers himself able to instruct the unlearned and teach the childish because he has knowledge of God's law. But he does not know God in Jesus Christ. Is that person acceptable to God in that condition? Absolutely not! He may have much to

boast about in his lifestyle, but he does not have the righteousness of Jesus Christ without which no one can see God. God rejects those who claim superiority over others (Isaiah 65:5).

All claims to superiority or self-righteousness are refuted in Romans 2:21-24. Conduct puts the lie to confession. The very ones who claimed a knowledge of and security in the law blasphemed God by breaking that law. Man looks on the outward appearance (conduct), but God looks on the heart (character). Woe to the people of whom it can be said, "*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him*" (Titus 1:16).

C. Unbelieving Jews neither understand nor receive true righteousness (Romans 2:25-29). "*He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; . . . but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; . . . whose praise is not of men, but of God*" (Romans 2:28, 29).

Why is self-righteousness not sufficient before God? "*We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*" (Isaiah 64:6). Not only is man's righteousness insufficient, he is helpless to improve his condition (Jeremiah 13:23). He is shut up either to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ or to condemnation.

D. Unbelieving Jews have not profited from the advantage of having received God's revelation (Romans 3:1-8). The Jewish people had the great advantage of being the first to receive God's special revelation. "*Unto them were committed the oracles of God*" (verse 2). Increased privilege was accompanied by increased obligation. Having received God's revelation, they were to be His messengers to the rest of the world. But they failed in that divine mission. Now Gentiles are seeking to take the gospel message to the descendants of the very people who received it originally, and most are rejecting it today.

Yes, the Jew is a sinner who needs to be saved.

III. ALL ARE SINNERS (Romans 3:9-12, 19)

Paul has proved that Gentiles are sinners who need to be saved (Romans 1:18-32). He has proved that Jews are sinners who need to be saved (Romans 2:1 — 3:8). Now he concludes that all people are sinners who need to be saved (Romans 3:9-20).

A. Universal guilt is established by a scriptural statement. "*As it is written*" (verse 10) indicates that Paul is quoting scripture in verses 10-18. Examine the references in Psalms 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; Isaiah 59:7, 8. The inspired apostle heaped reference upon reference to remove all

argument. The conclusion must be that God has concluded all under sin (Romans 11:32). The section draws to an end with these words: “*We know that what things soever 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*” (Romans 3:19). That includes everyone.

B. Universal guilt is proved by personal conduct (Romans 3:10-12). After whom do humans seek? Do they do good or evil? What words come from their lips? Are they living in peace or turmoil? Do they reverence God or ignore Him? Answer those questions and it becomes evident that all human beings are sinners.

“*Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*” (Proverbs 20:9). Who, indeed? “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way*” (Isaiah 53:6). “*There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

C. Universal guilt is sealed by divine law (Romans 3:19). When God's law convinces us of sin, there is no further appeal to be made. And we are all condemned by the law. “*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*” (James 2:10). We all have sinned, and we are all guilty before God.

He who says he has never sinned deceives himself, and he who says he has no sin to concern him now makes God a liar (1 John 1:8, 10). It is much better to confess sin and receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). You can be forgiven now if you confess your sin to God, ask for His forgiveness, and trust Him to save you as He promised.

Here is our hope. “*What can wash away my sins?/Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*” “*The blood of Jesus Christ. . . cleanseth us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7).

Questions

1. What is sin?
2. How is Romans 3:19 related to Romans 11:32?
3. What great sin did the Gentiles first commit?
4. In what three ways did the judgment of God fall on them?
5. What great sin did the Jews commit after receiving God's revelation?
6. Why are unbelieving Jews in need of salvation?
7. How does the Bible prove that all are sinners?
8. How does conduct prove that all are sinners?
9. How would you tell a sinner the way to be saved?

10. How can you have assurance that you have been forgiven?