

All Under Sin

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 September 2014

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] Let's take a seat and open your Bibles up to Romans.

Romans chapter 3. For those of you who have not been with us over the last few months, we began a series back in June, at the very beginning of June, the first week of June through the book of Romans.

And we have now reached chapter 3. We're in the middle of chapter 3 this week. And so I encourage you, if you at times feel like, oh, I wish I'd heard that sermon in that passage over there, or I would better understand what he said this morning if I'd heard that sermon two weeks ago, I encourage you to go online.

You can find our sermons on our website. You can listen to all the sermons from Romans. You can even go to sermonaudio.com and find the sermons on there. But I encourage you to go back and listen to those, because this is a book in which the Apostle Paul is systematically laying out and explaining the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I don't want us to miss any aspect of his presentation of the Gospel. So here we are this morning in chapter 3, and we're going to begin in verse 9 and read all the way down through verse 18.

[1 : 15] And so I want to ask you guys, if you would, I know you just sat down, but I want to ask you to stand up and honor God's Word with me while we read together. Paul writes, What then?

Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin. As it is written, none is righteous.

No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good.

Not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery. The way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

[2 : 16] Father, give us understanding now by the power of your Spirit as we think about your Word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. I don't know.

I'm sure that most of you have noticed. I don't know how many, though, have noticed that the last few years at the box office, in the movie theaters, the last few years, I don't know, maybe the last seven or eight years or six or seven years, have really been just a virtual treasure trove for nerds.

I mean, it seems like every month, for about six months out of the year, there's some new sci-fi or superhero movie that comes out. It's constant. It's just, we've been barraged with them over the last few years.

I can't even really count up just off the top. I couldn't even count up how many there have been. And most of them have been huge successes. Most of them have made hundreds of millions of dollars, and some of them have even broken over into the billion dollar range of money that they've made.

I mean, just a playground for nerds at the movie theater for the last few years. And I can say that because I'm a little bit of a nerd myself, and I go to most of those movies. You know, I have three boys, and so I have to go see the movies, to evaluate the movies, to determine whether or not they're appropriate for my kids to go see.

[3 : 32] So I'm just, I'm forced to go to the movies more frequently lately. It's just kind of been the way that it is. And not all of the movies, by the way, pass the test. But if they do pass the test, then I have to go again to take the kids to see the movie.

And it's a really big burden. It's really frustrating. But one of the things that I've noticed in these movies is that the stakes keep getting higher and higher. They have to, because once you've seen a city destroyed in one movie, well, you don't want to watch another city get destroyed.

You've already seen that. So now they've got to threaten an entire country, or maybe even the entire world. And then they've got to move to threatening the entire galaxy. I mean, it just keeps getting bigger and bigger. The threat keeps growing.

The threat keeps going partly because we get bored of these things when they have. The same thing happens in different movies with different characters. We get a little bit bored. But the threat also keeps growing because filmmakers want us to look and see these heroes they're putting on screen.

And they want their hero to seem bigger and better and stronger than the heroes in the other movies. And the easiest way to do that is to make the threat bigger, the threat more dangerous.

[4 : 39] And if their hero can overcome a bigger problem than the other hero, then he's a better hero. Well, there's a lot of truth in that. And the fact of the matter is that as we're reading through Romans, we have seen the Apostle Paul since chapter 1, verse 18.

We have seen him lay out the problem of human sinfulness. And he has laid it out in massive scope. He is showing us and helping us to see and understand exactly what Christ has overcome in his death.

And to the degree that we understand the breadth of sin and the depth of sin, to that degree will we understand and rejoice in what Christ has accomplished on the cross.

It is no small feat for Jesus to take upon himself the punishment that you and I deserve for our sins. That's not a small thing. There is no movie.

There is no catastrophe that they can present upon a movie screen that will compare, that will even approach comparing to what Christ has accomplished on the cross. But we won't understand that.

[5 : 44] We won't get the magnitude of what Jesus has done on the cross if we don't first understand the magnitude of the threat against us. The magnitude of the problem that he came to solve and that he in fact did solve on the cross.

And so Paul has been helping us. He has been showing us just how bad, just how broad, just how deep this problem goes since chapter 1, verse 18.

And now in the passage that we're looking at this morning, he has sort of reached a crescendo. This is the climax of his argument about human sinfulness. He's going to show us now, and he's going to demonstrate by quoting from six different Old Testament passages, he's going to show us just how bad the problem of sin is.

So this is it. We have been now for a couple of months talking about the problem of sin, and now we've finally arrived at the point where the Apostle Paul reaches the climax of his argument, of his demonstration of the sinfulness of sin.

So I want you to take a look at how he introduces this passage. He asks a question that ties us in to everything that he's really been saying since chapter 2, verse 1. He asks a question that says, What then?

[6 : 57] Are we Jews any better off? In other words, in regard to sin, in regard to the big problem that humanity faces, are we, as the Jewish people, any better off than the Gentiles?

And if you've read chapter 2, you know the answer to that question is no. The Jews have a sin problem as well. They face the same basic issue as they stand before God on Judgment Day, and that is despite the fact that they have the law of God, despite the fact that God has indeed entrusted them, he says, Paul says, with the oracles of God, despite that, nevertheless, they have failed to obey His Word.

They have failed to give to God the glory and honor that He deserves as God, and because of that, they stand just as guilty as the Gentiles do.

Or we might say today, what advantage do people who go to church have regularly? What advantage do they have on Judgment Day? And the answer would be, apart from faith in Christ, they don't have any advantage, because they still have the same sin problem.

You and I, sitting here comfortably on a Sunday morning, at least fairly comfortably in those chairs, have the same problem that's faced by men and women who are sitting, say, in prison this morning.

[8 : 17] We have the same basic problem, and that is that we are sinners as we stand before God. And Paul says the Jews face the same basic issue as the Gentiles.

They are not any better off on Judgment Day because they are descendants of Abraham. That's his final answer to the question that he poses all the way throughout chapter 2.

What's the advantage of being a Jew? Why bother with Jewishness? And the final ultimate answer is, on Judgment Day, they're no better off. And then he says, we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.

So chapter 1, 18 through the end of chapter 1 is about Greeks, or about Gentiles, about non-Jews. They have a sin problem. Chapter 2 is about Jews. They have a sin problem. And Paul says, I have already made the charge.

I have already laid the accusation that all are under sin. And I want us this morning to focus upon those three words. The word all and the words under sin.

[9 : 22] Because in these passages that Paul is going to go on to quote from the Old Testament, he aims to show us from God's Word that sin is extensive in its effects.

In other words, it is a problem for all people. It is a problem for every single person upon the face of the earth, both Jew and Gentile. And everyone falls into one of those two categories.

Everyone. So it's extensive. Or we might say that our depravity, our sinfulness is universal. And then secondly, he describes our sinfulness not by simply saying, all are sinners.

He goes further than that. He uses a phrase. He says, all are under sin. Which is a way of highlighting not merely the scope of sin, the breadth of sin, but a way of highlighting the depth of sin in the individual hearts of all those who are, in fact, sinners.

So we're going to look at these verses this morning that Paul quotes from the Old Testament. And we're going to see how they demonstrate two things. Number one, they demonstrate that sin is universal. There's no one exempt from the charge.

[10 : 31] And then number two, they're going to demonstrate that sin is our depravity is total. It's utter. It's to the core of who we are. So take a look at the passages that Paul cites.

Most of you can see them pretty easily in your Bibles because your Bible sort of sets them over. It tabs them over a little bit. And so verses 10, the end of verse 10, all the way down through verse 18, might be sort of set off in different sort of typeface in your Bible because these are, in fact, all quotations and paraphrases from the Old Testament.

In fact, they are all quotations and paraphrases from poetic sections of the Old Testament, which is why they're set off like this. Most of them, in fact, five of these six quotations come from the book of Psalms and then the other comes from the book of Isaiah.

But I want you to look closely at these. Because the passages that Paul chooses to cite demonstrate that both Jews and Gentiles can be said to be under sin.

Now, we won't look at every Old Testament quotation, but I want to look at two here real briefly. Verses 10 and 11 and 12 are a quotation and a bit of a combination with a paraphrase from Psalm 14.

[11 : 44] And Psalm 14 is David's description of the sinfulness of the Gentile world. So I want you to hold your place in Romans and turn all the way back in your Bibles to Psalm 14.

Or if you're using your phone or your iPad, then just scroll on up to Psalm 14. In Psalm 14, in the middle of verse 1, Paul begins his quotation. It says, They are corrupt.

They do abominable deeds. There is no one who does good. That should sound familiar. Verse 2, The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

Now, that's rhetorical. The reply to that is, God's not going to see anyone who understands. God's not going to see anyone who's seeking after Him. There is no one.

And so Paul simply paraphrases that, rephrases that in Romans, and simply says, There's no one who understands. No one who seeks for God. Because that's David's intent here in verse 2. Verse 3, They have all turned aside.

[12 : 49] Together they have become corrupt. There is no one who does good. Not even one. Not a single person, David says. David looks out among the world of non-Jewish, non-Israelite unbelievers.

And David says, There's nobody among them who does good. There's no one righteous. Not a single person. Not one. So it's an indictment of the Gentile world.

Really proving up what Paul says in Romans chapter 1 about the Gentiles. No one does good. No one seeks for God. No one understands.

Not a single person. And you might say, But Paul, your point, you said you were going to show that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin.

And this is only about Gentiles. So how are you going to go about showing me that the Jews have the same problem? He's going to do that by quoting from Isaiah. I want you to turn over.

[13 : 48] You can lose Psalm 14 for a second. And turn over to Isaiah chapter 59. Isaiah chapter 59 is an indictment by the prophet Isaiah of the sinfulness of Israel.

So he says, If you look in verse 2, Speaking to Israel, he says, Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.

Your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. Your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. And on and on he goes to describe the sinfulness of the Jewish people.

And when you get to verse 7, you come to the portion of this passage that the Apostle Paul quotes in Romans 3. Verse 7, Their feet run to evil and they are swift to shed innocent blood.

Then move down to verse 8, The way of peace they do not know. All of those are found in Romans. Verses 7 and 8, those portions of 7 and 8 are found in Romans chapter 3.

[14 : 56] Verse 15, Their feet are swift to shed blood and their paths are ruined in misery and the way of peace they have not known. So the Apostle Paul is proving up, showing the universality of depravity by quoting one passage from the Old Testament that points to the sinfulness of the Gentiles and another passage from the Old Testament that points to the sinfulness of the Jewish people.

So Paul is here saying, I've made the charge. All, both Jew and Gentile, all are under sin. Here's how I show you. David says, The Gentiles, no one does good.

Isaiah says, Among the Jewish people, they are swift to shed blood. They do not know the way of peace. Their sins have separated them from God.

So the same basic problem belongs to all of us. Every single one of us. In fact, I would want to pause here and just kind of get the attention of all the kids in the room or anybody, really, any of you who have been raised in church.

Okay? Are all kids paying attention? Kids? My kids paying attention here? Half of them. Alright? That'll count. That'll work. Listen, this is one thing you need to know as kids. If the people of Israel were not exempt from deserving a penalty for their sins, then just because you grow up in a Christian home, just because your mom and dad take you to church regularly, that does not exempt you from the same charge.

[16 : 31] You, boys and girls, are sinners. Just like me. Just like your mom. Just like your dad. Just like your grandparents. You're a sinner too.

All of us. None of us gets to be excused from this. We are all, every single one of us, guilty. And no matter how many times you go to church, no matter what kind of home you're raised in, same problem, guys.

You have the same problem I have. We're sinners. We mess up. We disobey God. We don't do what the Bible tells us to do. We're sinners. Every single one of us.

No one is exempt. But of course, Paul shows us more in this passage than the universality of sin. Because he is going to demonstrate for us the depth of our depravity.

I want you to look again in Romans 3 at these quotations. I want you to see them. Because if you look at verses 10, 11, and 12, what you'll see is sort of a general description of human sinfulness.

[17 : 38] Just a general description. And then if you look at verses 13 through 18, what you begin to see is an unfolding of the consequences of being someone who doesn't do good, who is not righteous.

So look at the general description, verses 10, 11, and 12. None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside.

Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. No goodness. No righteousness.

No one is out there seeking for God on their own. Now, I get it. Sometimes we read passages like this and we think, well, I'm not sure that that lines up with my experience.

I mean, this is true to the depth of who we are for all of us, every single one of us. We think to ourselves, but I mean, I know people who seem to genuinely be seeking after God.

[18 : 41] I know people who really seem to be that way. I know people who do good things. I mean, after all, does not the Apostle Paul acknowledge in chapter 2 that sometimes the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do what the law requires?

So we ask ourselves, what does Paul mean when he says, no one does good? There's not even like a little bit of good that people do? There's not even like a, I mean, there's not sort of a spark of goodness deep down within us?

Is that what the Apostle Paul is trying to say? How do we understand this? How do we sync this up with what Paul says in chapter 2 where the Gentiles sometimes obey the law? And how do we make sense out of the fact that not everyone we know is a murderer?

Not all of our neighbors and co-workers are thieves. Some of them might be, but not all of them. How do we match this? No one does good. No one seeks for God. With practical experience, and in fact, with what the Bible itself says about sometimes the Gentiles do by nature what the law requires.

What does this mean? There's two things I think that you need to understand about this statement, no one does good. Two things I think you need to understand. Number one, we can gather from the quotation in Psalm 14.

[19 : 52] You don't have to turn back to Psalm 14 again, but many commentators have noted that as you read through Psalm 14, the beginning of the passage says that there's no one who does good, and Paul takes that to mean there's no one who is righteous.

And yet, when you get down to verse 5 in Psalm 14, it says this, God is with the generation of the righteous. Pause. I thought there was nobody who does good.

What do you mean He's with the generation of the righteous? If there's no one who does good, there is no generation of the righteous. So, how do we make sense out of this? Well, remember, Psalm 14 is about the sinfulness of the Gentile people.

So, that David is making a distinction in Psalm 14 between what we would refer to as lost people and the people of God. The generation of the righteous are those who are a part of God's covenant.

Today, we would say those who have heard and responded to the Gospel. Those who have trusted in Christ. That's the generation of the righteous. So, when we say there's no one who does good, here's what we really mean.

[20 : 57] There is no one who, apart from God's saving grace, does what is good. There is no one outside of Christ who does what is good.

Because if you're in Christ, if you've believed in Him, if you've trusted in Him, then the Holy Spirit has come to live within you and He has begun to create within you a new heart. He has begun to change your desires.

He has begun to cause you to become, progressively, a person who does righteousness. So, to say there's no one who is righteous, there's no one who does good, means there's no one apart from Christ, apart from the saving and transforming work of God's grace, there is no one who does good.

So, that's the first thing that you need to recognize about this statement. The second thing I think that you need to recognize is that Paul has a very clear definition of righteousness in mind throughout Romans.

In fact, I think that's why in verse 11 he changes the word good to righteous there. because he wants us to connect the goodness that David talks about in Psalm 14 with the kind of righteousness that he has been talking about throughout Romans 1, 2, and 3.

[22 : 09] And for the Apostle Paul, righteousness consists primarily in a commitment to uphold and preserve the glory of God in all things.

Alright? Righteousness for Paul, on our behalf, is our commitment to uphold and preserve God's glory. And on God's behalf, it is God's commitment to uphold and preserve His glory.

So, righteousness has to do with the glory of God. And you may outwardly conform to the law of God, and yet inwardly you do not honor Him and glorify Him as God, or as Paul says, give thanks to Him as God.

So that we can, outwardly, in comparison with other people, we can be relatively good. In other words, compared to your neighbor, you might be a pretty good person in those terms.

But when measured by God's standards of righteousness, of doing all things for His sake, for His name, for His glory, Paul is telling us, apart from Christ, apart from God's saving grace, nobody does that.

[23 : 17] Nobody. Nobody. Nobody genuinely seeks for God. We seek the benefits. We seek the advantages. We do not seek God's glory apart from His transforming grace within us.

Now we begin to see, now we begin to understand the depth of depravity in our hearts. This is not mainly about the outward things that we do.

This is not mainly about the visible expressions that sin takes in our lives. This passage is mainly about our hearts. And the truth of the matter is, down to the core of who we are, in our hearts, we are sinners through and through.

The theological term for that is total depravity. We are depraved, we are sinful in every aspect of who we are. It doesn't mean we are as bad as we could possibly be because we could all be a little bit worse than we are.

They're all sins that we pass up. Everyone could be worse than they are. But it means that everything that we do apart from Christ, everything about us at its core is not designed to give God glory and therefore to the very core of who we are in our thoughts, in our feelings, and in our actions, we are, in fact, sinners through and through.

[24 : 47] We are totally, utterly sinful and depraved. That's the main point. It's only secondarily, it's only after that that Paul begins to describe just a snapshot of some of the ways in which that sinfulness finds expression.

You see some of the actions of those who are totally depraved, starting in verse 13. First, he describes our speech. Things that come out of our mouths. Their throat is an open grave.

They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. So we see our sin finding expression, first off, in our words, in our speech.

Jesus says it's out of the heart that the mouth speaks. And that's true. true. Every time that we say something rude to someone, every time we utter an unkind word, every time we decide to say the crude joke or to say the crude thing, or every time that we use our mouths to do anything other than honor and glorify Christ, we show the nature of our hearts.

And then it just filters out further from there because we speak things that don't glorify God and we do things that don't glorify God. Verse 15, their feet are swift to shed blood.

[26 : 14] In their paths are ruin and misery. In the way of peace they have not known. And then he just comes back to the general summary. There's no fear of God before their eyes. That's why.

Why is there violence in the world? Why? Why? Because of the sinfulness of the human heart. Why are these terrible, atrocious things happening in the Middle East?

Because they have the same kind of hearts that you and I have. You see? Opportunity, the lack of God's restraining grace, and sin abounds.

And we become swift to shed blood. That's who we are apart from God's grace. And Paul would have us know and understand that none of us are exempt regardless of our background.

And the sinfulness that we have to deal with is not a surface level issue. It's not something that we can just go through a program or read a self-help book or try harder to deal with and we can get over it.

[27 : 22] That's not it. It's not an external thing. It's an internal thing. In fact, when we get to chapter 6, we're going to see the Apostle Paul begin to describe sin as a power at work within us.

He says, do not let sin be your master. Do not let sin lord over you. Sin, rooted in our hearts, would be our master.

Sin, covering all of who we are down to our very depths, would rule over every decision we make and every word we say and every action that we take.

We do that because it is present all the way down. And Paul wants us to know that every single one of us has the same problem.

And there is one solution to the problem. Take a look down just a few verses. Paul says in verse 21 of chapter 3, he says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

[28 : 38] We are not righteous. There is no one righteous. There is no one who does good. We, on our own, stand under God's wrath. The wrath of God is being revealed against all unrighteousness, Paul says in chapter 1, verse 18.

And now we know that we are the unrighteous and God's wrath bears down upon us. But here he says, now there is a righteousness that comes from God by faith in Jesus. If you will but trust in Jesus, your unrighteousness is no longer a problem because the very righteousness of Jesus comes to you as a free gift and covers you so that on judgment day you don't stand clothed in your unrighteousness, you stand clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

But that only happens by faith in Jesus. That does not happen by growing up in a Christian home. It does not happen by attending church. It does not happen by reading your Bible.

It does not happen by anything that we do except for faith in Jesus. And if you will trust in Him, the problem of your depravity can be solved instantaneously.

And if you will but call those around you to trust in Christ, the problem of universal depravity will begin to be solved in everyone who trusts in Him.

[30 : 02] Let's pray.