

## HOW BAD OFF ARE WE? TOTAL DEPRAVITY

9.30.2018

Romans 3:9-18

• “We all make mistakes.” “Nobody’s perfect.” “I’m only human.”

### 1. HOW BAD OFF ARE WE?

• **V. 9 of ch. 3** begins the conclusion of what Paul has been writing ever since **ch. 1 v. 18**. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” Who exactly? Gentiles or Jews? His answer is yes; both. Paul’s reason behind writing Romans 1:18–3:20 is to show why we need the Gospel (which he outlines in Romans 3:21-26). These verses we’re looking at today are the culmination of Paul’s argument: “Why we need God to save us!”

**ROMANS 3:9** 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.

- **Q. What does Paul mean?** At least two incredibly profound things:
- **A1. First, Paul is saying**, “Before being supernaturally saved by Jesus, the morally upright model citizen who has attended church every Sunday of their life is just as *spiritually bankrupt* before God as the atheist murderer who gets drunk as often as possible.” He’s saying, “We’re all lost.”
- **A1. Second, Paul is saying**, “Our legal standing, spiritually speaking, is ‘under sin.’” **As one commentator put it**, “To be ‘under sin’ is a legal term; we are citizens of sin. It’s as though we all have a spiritual passport, which shows our legal citizenship. It is either stamped Under Sin or Under Grace” (TK, RomansForYou, pg.66)
- **Thus, Moses writes, in GEN. 6:5, detailing the condition of mankind after The Fall of Ada & Eve**, “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, & that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
- **King David, the great song-writer, lamented over his sinful condition, when he wrote PSALM 51:5**: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”
- **The LORD says through the Prophet in JEREMIAH 17:9** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”
- **In ROMANS 5, Paul helps us understand that Adam’s sin lead to all of us being sinners**. “18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification & life for all men. 19 For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”
- **In ROMANS CH. 6, Paul details what every human being is naturally, upon entering the world**: “Slaves of sin.”
- **In EPHESIANS 2, Paul writes to those whom Jesus has now saved, reminding them of their former predicament**: “1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
- **Spurgeon**: “You know, they tell us, now, that when Adam fell, he broke his little finger—and it was fixed up—and he recovered. But that is not what the Bible says. He broke his neck and a great deal more than his neck! Oh, what a fall was there, my brothers and sisters! You and I and all of us fell down. *It was a fall which dislocated man altogether.* ... Then, the fall brought on great depravity. Although they make it out, now, that man, through the fall, has only suffered very slightly, just a little toothache, or something of that sort, yet the Scripture does not tell us so. *His whole head is sick and his whole heart faint, and from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head he is nothing but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.’*”
- **This question**, “How bad off are we?” Has come up once or twice throughout Church History (wink). Most notably, this came up at the beginning of the fifth century when a British Monk named Pelagius encountered Saint Augustine’s writings. “Grant what you command and command what you desire” Augustine wrote as one of his prayers. Pelagius was furious! He and Augustine debated the point at length, over years, and you know who won? The Bible.
- **Sadly, many professing Christians today are at least semi-Pelagian’s**, believing that *human beings are somewhere floating on top of the ocean in need of a life-raft to grab onto* rather than what the Bible actually says: *we are spiritually dead at the bottom of the sea in need of a resurrection.* Dead me don’t grab life-rafts.
- **How bad off are we, as post-Fall humans?** To use Biblical language, We’re “sinners from conception,” “only evil continually,” our hearts are “deceitful above all things and desperately sick,” “Slaves of sin,” “Dead in trespasses and sins and by nature children of wrath.”

• **This does not mean people are as bad as they could be**, or that everyone has sinned in equally horrific ways—God restricts our evil through parents, government, even our conscience. It does however mean that since the fall of Adam and Eve every human being is born equally under sin; dead in trespasses and sins. We are all lost. And lost is lost; there are no degrees of lostness.

• In short, we are Sinners by nature, inherited from our Fallen parents, and that radically effects *what we Want and what we Do*. That's where Paul turns next.

## 2. HOW DOES OUR BADNESS EFFECT US?

• **If these descriptions of how total depravity fleshes itself out in us seems amiss to you, take a breath and consider 2 things:** 1) We are created not simply to refrain from doing bad things, and as long as keep from that we're doing fairly good—no. We're created to glorify God & enjoy Him forever. Anything less than that aim means we're worshipping something or someone else. 2) If you know something is off with your physical health, you go to a specialist, and she tells you that you have a terminal illness and need radical help, ignoring her would not be wise—probably even fatal.

• Keller, in his book Romans for you, points out the 7 ways Paul is saying

**ROMANS 3:10-18** 10 as it is written (Psalm 5, 10, 14, 36; Isaiah 59:7-8; Ecclesiastes 7:20,):

(1) **OUR LEGAL STANDING.** 10b “None is righteous, no, not one;

(2) **OUR MINDS.** 11a no one understands;

(3) **OUR MOTIVES.** 11b no one seeks for God.

(4) **OUR WILLS.** 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

(5) **THE WORDS THAT COME FROM US.** 13 “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” 14 “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

(6) **OUR RELATIONSHIPS.** 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known.”

(7) **OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD.** 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

• Jordan B. Peterson's reasoning behind why humans won't take their own medication but will give it to their dog.

“And so we return to our original query: Why would someone buy prescription medication for his dog, and then so carefully administer it, when he would not do the same for himself? Now you have the answer, derived from one of the foundational texts of mankind. Why should anyone take care of anything as naked, ugly, ashamed, frightened, worthless, cowardly, resentful, defensive and accusatory as a descendant of Adam? Even if that thing, that being, is himself? . . . You're bad enough, as other people know you. But only you know the full range of your secret transgressions, insufficiencies and inadequacies. No one is more familiar than you with all the ways your mind and body are flawed. No one has more reason to hold you in contempt, to see you as pathetic—and by withholding something that might do you good, you can punish yourself for all your failings. A dog, a harmless, innocent, unselfconscious dog, is clearly more deserving.” - Jordan B. Peterson. *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* (p. 52).

• **We know we're sinners at the core, at the root;** we're just too scared to admit it or too cowardly to call a spade a spade. Maybe we're too scared to admit such a problem because a problem *this* great is impossible for us to solve. It really is impossible for us to solve. **When we realize we're sinners at the core** and there's nothing we can do to change that—*what the doctrine of Total Depravity spells out*—we're immediately transported from thinking of ourselves like the Good Samaritan and realize we're the bloodied and helpless guy on the side of the road who's only hope is their someone they've made their enemy giving them grace. And that's a scary place to be.

## 3. THEN WHO CAN BE SAVED?

**LUKE 18:26-27** 26 Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” 27 But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

• **Jordan B. Peterson: Q.** “How are we going to justify our miserable existence? How are we going to atone for our sinful nature?” **A.** “You could help direct the world, on its careening trajectory, a bit more toward Heaven and a bit more away from Hell. Once having understood Hell, researched it, so to speak—particularly your own individual Hell—you could decide against going there or creating that. You could aim elsewhere. You would, in fact, devote your life to this. That would give you a Meaning, with a capital M. That would justify your miserable existence. That would atone for your sinful nature, and replace your shame and self-consciousness with the natural pride and forthright confidence of someone who has learned to walk in the garden with God again.” (Jordan B Peterson's *12 Rules for Life* pg. 63-64). Clinical psychologists and Philosophers have answers. And they're wrong.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. - Paul, in Galatians 4:4-7 (“but God” in Ephesians 2:4-7)