

The Universality of 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: 05 December 2010

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Amen. We'll get back to 1 Peter after the holidays.

Romans chapter 3, and the focus will be really verses 9 through 12. Although this particular section of the book, of the chapter, really carries us all the way through verse 20.

And I am going to read verses 9 through 20 in just a moment. And just by way of review, very quickly, so far in our study of Romans, we have seen what the Bible has to say about several classifications or categories.

I'm not sure what the right word would be, or categories of unbelievers. And we've looked at the heathen. Well, that's been a long time ago. You might not remember what we said about that, but in chapter 1, primarily that's the focus.

The heathen, and the heathen is the one. Kind of define these different ways, and tonight I'll define it this way. The heathen is the one who has a perverted religion. And then we looked at the hypocrite.

[1:34] The hypocrite, and starting in chapter 2 and running through most of that chapter, or at least up through verse 17 or 16. And the hypocrite is the one that has a pretend religion.

All right? Pretend religion. Now, then third, and we did complete this last time that we were in Romans. The third classification is the Hebrew.

And the Jew. And Paul is using them as kind of a test case or a case in point. The Hebrew. And that started in chapter 2, verse 17, and ran all the way through the eighth verse of chapter 3.

And we're going to start up here in verse 9 in a minute. But we might say that the Hebrew is the one who has a powerless religion. A powerless religion. And let me just kind of review the Hebrew or that particular classification for just a moment.

You see, this is the one. The Hebrew represents the one who has some measure of commitment to the true religion.

[2:41] True religion. Biblical religion. We might call it. And yet, at the same time, this is one who, very religious and committed to the right religion, but who is a stranger to Christ.

We're not talking about a saved person. We're talking about a lost person. Now, that kind of religion is best, I think, best illustrated by the Hebrew people.

And not that I think that. That's apparently what Paul thought. That's why he used them, the Hebrew, as the example here for us. For this kind of religious person, orthodox religion, but just a powerless religion.

Because this particular person, though very religious, has no relationship with Christ. And there are many today. Right? Both Jew and Gentile.

And I use those two categories kind of like the Bible does to encompass all of mankind. Both Jew and Gentile. And I'll insert as a part of that, even Baptists.

[3:45] That's what we are. Have this kind of religion. This kind of powerless religion. I'm not saying that you do and I do. Hopefully, we are all in Christ here.

And our religion, I'm just using the word religion. Hopefully, it's not a powerless religion. But there are many who are very engaged in the right religion.

And yet, have no relationship with Christ. And so, that includes even many Baptists, sadly.

Now, all three of these categories. The heathen, the hypocrite, the Hebrew. Are really on level ground before Almighty God.

Level ground. That is, in an enviable level ground. That is, that they all three are guilty before him. And that's the point of what Paul is trying to convey to us.

[4:49] In fact, he says there in verse 9. We'll get to the text. In a minute, he says, are we better than they? And he says, not at all. So, all three are on level ground. Now, just in case some might

see themselves in the previous, may not see themselves in the previous three categories.

Paul then moves to a fourth. And, in a sense, he sums up his thoughts here by revealing this fourth category, which is an all-encompassing category.

And it is all of humanity. All right. So, that's the fourth category. And so, it's the guilt of all humanity. All right. So, now, you have your Bibles open there. Chapter 3, starting with verse 9.

Paul says, what then? Are we better than they? Speaking as a Jew, he's saying here.

He's just covered the Hebrew, the Jew. Are we any better than they? They who? The Gentile. And all those he's been talking about from chapter 1 on.

[5:58] Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.

There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside.

They have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open tomb. Now, get that imagery. With their tongues they have practiced deceit.

The poison of asps is upon their lips.

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace they have not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law. That every mouth may be stopped.

[7:00] And all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight. For by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Now that's the larger text. And again, we're not going to cover all of those verses here tonight. I hope to be able to cover all of them. Finish all of these verses next Sunday night.

Now, this is, in a sense, a summation. Paul's summation of God's case against the human race.

The lost human race. All humanity is, in a sense, summoned before God. Before the bar of God.

And this is the indictment. And he gives three. We can divide this text into three. And I would say that they would represent God's indictment upon all lost humanity.

[8:02] Three things. There is the universality of human sin. That's what we'll focus on tonight.

There is the criminality of human sin. And then third, the responsibility of human sin.

So we'll see all three of those, but not tonight. The first one will be tonight. The universality of human sin. Now, you will notice. And certainly you notice as I quoted the text here.

Which, that portion of it, that really is a quote from the Old Testament. You notice the repetition of the words, none. You notice that in there?

In fact, you can just kind of glance down there. There is none righteous. No, not one. You see this repeated, this idea. Verse 11.

There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside.

They have to gather. That is, all of them become unprofitable.

[9:02] There is none who does good. No, not one. Now, that's almost redundant, isn't it? In fact, it really is.

If we were writing in that way. We would say this is redundant. None. None. None. All of them.

None of them. No, not one.

None. And so, the idea here is that not a single member of Adam's race is excluded.

Not a single one. And so, if this is Paul's indictment, then the indictment is comprehensive. The indictment is all-inclusive.

You see, before, and this is important for us to note at this juncture. Before we can fully appreciate the grace of God, we must fully acknowledge the guilt of man.

[10:04] The guilt, the sin-guiltiness of man. And that guilt is universal. It leaves no one out.

And, you know, one might think, well, I'm not a heathen. I mean, I can just kind of imagine Paul's original readers and all readers since. And they're reading along here.

And they see Paul dealing with the heathen and the hypocrite. And so, the response is, I'm not a heathen. I'm not a hypocrite. I'm not a Hebrew in the sense that I'm not steeped in a Christless, dry orthodoxy like the Hebrews.

I'm a Baptist. That's how we might object. Or some might object today. I'm not any of those. I don't fit into that category. I'm Baptist. Or I'm a Christian. Or I'm a good person.

That might be the objection. Well, amen. I'm glad you are. But the Bible says, Paul says in verse 9, are we better than they?

[11:05] Are we better than they? See, there's no space whatsoever for pride and self-exaltation on either side of the new birth, of the salvation experience.

Because we are all sinners. Right? Thank God. I know I can count on you, Wes. I believe it. I really do.

Thank you. We're all sinners. But now, I'm just kind of taking a little sideline there because that's really not Paul's point here. I mean, that's true.

No. We're all sinners. There's no place for pride here in thinking, well, you know, I'm not a hypocrite. I'm not a heathen. I'm not all these. There's no place for pride here.

But the point here is not so much that. Paul is here talking about humanity in general. That is, those in humanity who are apart from Christ.

[12:06] That's the idea here. He's not speaking about believers who may be living hypocrisy or lapsed into some kind of hypocrisy or lapsed into some kind of sin.

He's not talking about that. He's talking about lost people here. Those who are apart from Christ. And, you know, you and I, I'm sure, know some people who are good, honest, loving, moral people. But if they have never trusted Christ as Lord and Savior, then they are on the same ground as all the heathens and all the hypocrites in the world.

They are all under sin. Right? Thank you, Wes. Have to think about that a minute. It's true. Now, then let's notice, as we look, kind of work our way through this text, notice how Paul describes lost humanity.

Humanity. Humanity without Christ. And the first thing he says, this is number one, they are unrighteous. They are unrighteous.

[13:21] It's right there in the text. Verse 10 is a quote from Psalm 14, verse 3. There is, in fact, Paul says, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.

No, not one. That means, literally, humanity, by nature, is absolutely incapable of doing anything that is right before God.

In and of themselves. Absolutely incapable. There is none righteous, no, not one. Judges 17, 6.

We'll not turn to it here tonight, but it's repeated again in Judges 21, 25, I think, is a perfect description. Where the Bible says that every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Well, that's a perfect description of the world, our world today. That is the quintessential lost man or woman.

[14:33] Doing what is right in his or her own eyes. Now, you know, that's a quote from Judges. And when we go back to the period of the Judges, it was a dark time for God's people.

Dark time. But, listen, history repeats itself, doesn't it? And we are living today in very dark times. I look at some of the things that people are doing today. I try not to look. I'd like to close myself off to it. But you can't escape it.

And you just kind of consider and look at all the wickedness that is out there. Isn't it incredible? I don't want to really stop to think about it and consider it. It's incredible how wicked people are.

And the filth that is out there. In the open for all to see. It's not being hidden. It's not being done in secret. Though there are still some things, I'm sure, done in secret that would absolutely appall us.

[15:46] And yet there's plenty of things going on out there here in our own country, in our own culture, that is appalling. The filth that is out there.

And, you know, we just kind of shake our head. We kind of wonder, how could people do these kind of things? Do you ever think that way? How could they do such things? How can they be so sinful? How can they be so willing to do what is so obviously wrong? You ever thought that and wondered about that? But, see, we've misunderstood something.

These people don't see it as wrong. In fact, they see it as right. Isn't that what the point is here in Judges 17?

That passage I quoted a moment ago. Where the Bible says every man did that which was what? Right in his own eyes. Right. Not wrong.

[16:49] But right. Now that kind of sheds a little different light on things, doesn't it? Kind of gives you a truer perspective on what's going on in the sinful world.

And it's all wrapped up in the depravity of man. See, why do people, some people engage in homosexual activity?

Is it because they see it as wrong and they want to do wrong? No. They think it's right. They think it's right. And why do some people put before their eyes pornography in our world today?

It's so pervasive in our culture. Why do they do that? Because they know it's wrong and they want to do things that are wrong? No. In a twisted kind of way that's difficult for our minds to comprehend.

Because we're the redeemed and we have a new nature. And in a twisted sort of the way they think it's right. There's something right about it.

[17:57] You know. I mean, do people fight for legalized abortion? Because they think it is wrong and they love to do things that are wrong? Do they?

No. No. They think it's right. They think it's the right thing to do. They think it's right in their own eyes. And let's take some of the lesser things.

Why do people cheat? Some people cheat on their taxes or lie to their employers. Or why do men and women cohabit together rather than getting married?

Because they want to do wrong things? They want to live wrong? No. They do it because they think it's right. They think it's okay. See. That's the idea here.

Apart from Christ. All humanity is totally incapable of doing right before God. And they do wrong because they think it's right.

[18:50] And they do these things because they think it's right in their own eyes. But also, not only is man unrighteous, but Paul goes further.

To say that man is unreasonable. Unreasonable. Or maybe we could say unrationable. That's not a word.

Let's stick with unreasonable, okay? Verse 11. Look at it. There is none who understands. None who understands.

Paul told the Colossians that prior to their spiritual birth, he said that they were alienated from God and enemies of God in their minds.

Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2.14, The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him.

[19:50] Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. You see, listen, here's the idea. When it comes to sin, humanity is not only unrighteous, but humanity is unreasonable.

For example, someone might say, Well, you know, it doesn't really matter what a person believes as long as he or she is sincere about it. Dedicated to it.

Now, is that reasonable? Hello out there. You out there somewhere? Wes, what happened to you? Okay, thank you. Is that reasonable? It doesn't make any difference what you believe. As long as you really believe it. And live by it.

And everything is going to work out all right. He said, that's ridiculous. Do you know that the majority of the human race believe that very thing? In fact, you want to get someone to bristle up and argue with you, just suggest to them that there's only one way to heaven.

[21:07] One way. See, it's not reasonable. Any other people believe that? Well, you know, what if a professor of mathematics held the same philosophy about addition?

Two plus two equals four. Or maybe six. Or eight. Or 23. Or 48. Or 110. Or just whatever you want. You know, it makes no difference.

Really. Which answer you believe. Just be sincere about it. Well, that's ridiculous, isn't it? That's why I say that lost humanity is unreasonable.

Or how about this? You know, and I've heard people say this. Or they'll articulate this in many different ways. And here's the idea. I'm going to turn over a new leaf in my life.

Ever had anybody say that to you? I certainly have. They'll come, you know, to visit with the pastor. And to that point, their life has been a wreck.

[22:15] Or they've lived in sin. And they're just sick of it. And so in their idea, the answer is to turn over a new leaf.

Just put all that sin, just put that behind them. So that's the idea. Going to turn over a new leaf.

Do you know that the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 3.15, that God requires that which is past? You say, what do you mean?

Well, let's think of it this way. Suppose you're a creditor. And you receive a letter from one of your debtors. Someone who owes you money.

And the letter reads like this. Just listen to this. Dear sir, I realize that I owe you \$5,000. But today I have turned over a new leaf in my ledger.

[23:12] From now on, I intend to pay my debts. I mean, from now on, I'm going to do that. From now on, I'm going to live up to the highest standards of business integrity.

I am ignoring the past. And I'm going to be living for the future. Sincerely, John Q. Daddor. Would that be reasonable?

Would it? No, it wouldn't. Would a creditor let that guy off the hook? No. In fact, that creditor would be astounded at that kind of philosophy.

That kind of business philosophy. And yet, I would say that that same creditor would use the same kind of philosophy concerning matters of the soul.

You see, it's unreasonable. Very unreasonable. There is none that understands. Man does not understand the seriousness of his sin. Man does not understand the holiness of God.

[24:24] The absolute holiness of God. Man does not understand what is involved in the difference or the alternatives of heaven or hell.

There is none that understands. Man does not understand the cost of the very salvation he has rejected or she has rejected.

If he did, he would run to salvation. He would race to be saved. And by the way, by God's grace, when he does, he is saved. Paul mentions a third aspect of the universality of sin.

Man is third. Unresponsive. Verse 11. There is none who understands.

And then he says this. There is none who seeks after God. That's pretty serious. None who seeks after God.

[25:32] Now, the question is. What or who are they seeking? Because there are many who are seeking.

World is full of religious seekers. Right? I mean, listen. Everyone has some kind of religion.

The world is full of pagan temples and zealous worshippers. Traditional as well as non-traditional.

I mean, there is an infinite number of different kinds of worshippers. Are they not seeking God in their own way?

Be careful how you answer that. You might contradict scripture. Because the answer from scripture is no, they're not. They're not seeking God in their own way.

[26:35] Because there is none that seeketh after God. None. No, not one. And so what's the answer? Well, I want you to look at 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

And just listen to verse 20 and kind of following. In fact, I'll start with verse 19. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 19. Paul says or asks, what am I saying then?

That an idol is anything? Or what is offered to idols is anything? Of course, his subject is, you know, about the eating of meat sacrificed to idols and so forth.

He's going to make a point here. Verse 20 rather that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons. See, they're not seeking after God.

These seekers, these worshipers are not seeking after God. They are sacrificing to the demons and not to God.

[27:40] And I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

That is to say, there aren't many different kinds of religion that are all seeking the same thing.

There's only one true religion that is seeking the one true God.

And it's Christianity, biblical Christianity. Now, these other kinds of religions and faiths and some of them bizarre and way out there. And some of them may be a little bit more traditional.

Some of them old, some of them new. And there are newer ones coming on the scene every single day. They're not seeking God in their own kind of way. They're serving the devil.

Because none seeks after God. That is, none who are a member of lost humanity. None. Behind the false religions and the beliefs of this world is the God of this world.

[28:45] Don't ever forget that. So don't try to, or make the mistake, to somehow put other religions on some, not equal footing, but something close to Christianity.

I mean, after all, they may be wrong, and they're going to go to hell if they don't choose Christ. But they are at least seeking after God. But they're not. That's the indictment against lost humanity that Paul is making here, as lost humanity in a sense of standing before the bar of God.

They are not any of them seeking after God. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians. Let me add this passage. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 3.

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, to the lost, whose minds the God of this age has blinded.

Who's the God of this age? Well, certainly not Yahweh God. Who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

[29:57] For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves, your bondservants, for Jesus' sake. So what Paul is referring to here, in Romans chapter 3, verse 11, is the doctrine of depravity.

The idea here is depravity. It's depravity. And now, you know, most of us have a definition of depravity that goes no further than just the idea of the sinfulness of man.

And that certainly is a part of it. The idea of depravity is inability. The idea of inability. Jesus said in John 6, 14, No man can come to me except the Father.

Draw him. But now, think though for a minute, the initiative of God. What God has done. He has given us His Son. He has given lost humanity His Scriptures.

He has given His Spirit. And sadly, most people will never respond. But for the grace of God, no one will. No one.

[31:01] There is none that seeketh after God. Now, one more. Mankind is unrighteous, unreasonable, unresponsive, and then one more. Mankind is unrepentant.

Unrepentant. Look at verse 12. They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable.

There is none who does good. No, not one. No, not one. And there it is again, isn't it?

Unprofitable. Kind of an interesting word. It's a big time word in this season. All the retailers are certainly wanting to make big profits, aren't they?

But unprofitable is something different here. In fact, it originally was used to refer to good fruit that has become overripe.

[32:03] It's kind of interesting. Not just overripe, but fruit that has become spoiled. And so we could translate it this way. They have together become sour.

Spoiled. Rotten. Now you put all that together and we have the condition of the human race since Adam. Man is kind of like a large group of travelers.

Mankind is like a large group of travelers who have all gone the wrong way. And which is, by the way, the opposite direction from the right way. And they are all counting on their good deeds and their good works to get them where they need to go.

But God says their good deeds are rotten. They're rotten. But will they repent? No.

That's the indictment. They continue in the direction of sin. And what is the description of lost humanity?

[33:15] Paul's going to not only tell us here of their... Forgot what it was now.

Wow. What is the word? Well, he's going to give us three things.

And we'll get to the other three. Somebody remember the first point? Wes, you're taking notes, aren't you? Universality of sin. See, I knew you'd get it right.

The universality of sin. The answer to all of this, of course, is God's grace. I read something that I would like to quote for you.

Something that I got from John MacArthur. And I think a fitting way to end this. He said, The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody told of being asked by a warden of a large prison in New York City to speak to the inmates.

[34:20] Because there was no chapel or other suitable or safe place to speak to the group, he preached from a gangway at one end of the tier of cells.

And so he was therefore unable to see the face of a single prisoner. Can you imagine that preaching to the inmates? But you can't see their faces. After the message, he asked the warden permission to talk face to face with some of the men through the bars of their cells.

And so he was granted that request. And he soon discovered that most of them. Hadn't heard a word he said.

And weren't even listening to what he said. Because when Moody would ask an inmate why he was in prison, the man almost invariably declared his innocence. He would insist that a false witness testified against him.

Or that he was mistaken for the person who really committed the crime. Or that the judge or jury was prejudiced against him. Or he would give some other reason.

[35 : 39] He was unjustly incarcerated. And I began to get discouraged, Moody said. When I had gotten almost through, I found one man with his elbows on his knees.

And two streams of tears running down his cheeks. And I looked in at the little window and I said, My friend, what is your trouble?

And he looked up with despair and remorse on his face. And he said, my sins are more than I can bear. And I said, Moody said, thank God for that.

The evangelist was thankful because he knew that no man is open to God's way until he forsakes his own way. That he will not seek salvation until he admits his sin.

Think about that. All those inmates and only one repented. The answer, you see, is God's saving grace.

[37 : 02] The lesson for us is God's indictment to the human race is his business.

Our responsibility is like Moody. To proclaim the gospel. To proclaim the gospel.

And let God say. Thank you.