



Romans 3:9-20

For September 30, 2007

LESSON 4

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Romans 3:9-20 All Have Sinned

Key Points: The Apostle Paul makes a strong argument for the fact that everyone is guilty of sin. People often marginalize their sin because they compare their “lesser” sins to “greater” sins. They miss the fact that, compared to God’s holiness (not compared to one another), we are not righteous. Our “works”, our obedience to the law, does not justify us. We stand guilty before a holy God.

- We are all under sin
- Sin enslaves
- All have sinned
- We are made conscious of our sin through the law; obedience to the law does not produce righteousness

As believers, we know what it means to stand before a holy God with our sin exposed. Arrogance gives way to guilt and shame. We know experientially what it means to fall short of the glory of God—to understand the chasm that exists between our sinfulness and God’s holiness. The knowledge of our sin is a great gift, but we often don’t see it that way. It is ugly to acknowledge and hard to bear. How do we help people see it as the first step toward strengthening their relationship with God?

Personal Reflection:

- How does this passage speak to you personally?
- Can you identify barriers that keep you from confessing sin on a regular basis?
- What is the most important concept you want your group to think about during the next week?

Discussion Questions:

1. “People don’t just commit sin, they are under sin.”¹ This suggests a domination or slavery to sin. What solutions to sin does the world offer?
 - *Marxism: problem: unequal wealth. Solution: redistribute it fairly.*
 - *Philosophies: problem: we are ignorant. Solution: knowledge/education*
 - *Religions: problem: we have violated a standard. Solution: Sacrifice and penance.*
2. Why do human solutions fall short of the goal?
3. What is the underlying problem?
4. How can Scripture say no one seeks God? Aren’t the world’s religions mankind’s attempts to find God?
5. How can Scripture say “there is no one who does good” when there are so many kind, even “good,” non-Christians?
6. What does it look like for any of us to have “fear of God before our eyes”?
7. (V19) What silences mouths and holds the whole world accountable?



Though the verses, in context, are describing non-Christians, we may still learn from these verses about our own behavior.

8. What are the more obvious sins that we commit that we really don’t want to, but feel powerless, on our own, to overcome?
9. If we were free, what would it look like?
10. It is sometimes easy to gloss over the guilt of our sin because we feel our offenses are small in comparison to more blatant, horrific sin. In verses 13-14, the Apostle Paul first addresses sins of speech—words that we say to harm others. Why do we often marginalize these sins—sins that we are tempted to commit daily?
11. Why would the Apostle Paul begin with sins of speech rather than beginning with sins of violence (vs. 15-17)? ² *To emphasize the point that we all sin.*

12. Everyone is guilty of refusing to honor God. Even though we are believers and love God, how are we tempted to dishonor God, or take glory that belongs to Him alone?
13. Imagine (or remember) what it feels like to have your sin exposed in full view of a holy God. Our mouths will be silenced. Arrogance will melt. We will have nothing to say. The Apostle Paul intentionally wants to expose us to the reality of the guilt of our sin. What is your response?
14. What role does the Law of God have in our lives as Christians?
15. What does this passage reveal about God’s character?

Note: Questions 1-7 reflect the position of unbelievers, Questions 8-15 address our relationship with God as believers.

¹ NIV Application Commentary pgs. 111, 121-122

² NIV Application Commentary pg. 113