

All Have Sinned

Scripture Text: Romans 1:16-20; 3:9-20 **Background Scripture:** Romans 1:16-20; 3:9-20 **Devotional Reading:** Psalm 59:1-5

Time: A.D. 56 **Place:** from Corinth

Lesson Aims

- Summarize what Paul says about people's need for a solution to their sin problem and the helplessness of the law to provide it.
- Compare the problems Paul cites with the problems we see in our own culture.
- Memorize Romans 1:16-17.

Romans 1:16-20

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." ¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Romans 3:9-20

⁹What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ¹³"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ¹⁴"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵"Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know." ¹⁸"There is no fear of God before their eyes." ¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Introduction

What a timely lesson for the mankind's needs today: "All Have Sinned." This fact is the pinnacle of Christianity. Someone summarized this lesson's theme by saying, "All means all, and that's all that all means." Does this mean that our nation's and world's most holy men and women of God are sinners? Yes. What about those people found on Forbes' "richest people" lists, are they sinners too? Yes. Surely, a precious newborn baby just entering the world can't be labeled a sinner? Yes, she can and yes, she is. But, more important than compiling a list of unbelievers, is realizing that there is an answer for sin, and His name is Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23 declares, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

When a sinner first exercises faith in Christ, that person is saved from the penalty of sin and declared righteous. As the believer lives by faith, God continues to save him or her from the power of sin to live righteously.

Lest we make the false assumption that every reader of this lesson already knows the definition of sin, let us describe it as being physical and spiritual separation from God. There are "now" and "later" consequences to this fact; just know that there is a "now" and "later" price to pay for not belonging to God's Forever Family.

Background

Paul's letter to the Christians in the city of Rome is perhaps the weightiest of all his epistles (letters). It sets forth in a clear and systematic fashion the gospel he proclaimed as "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13).

Romans was written from Corinth in about A.D. 56 on Paul's third missionary journey. He was anticipating a preaching tour in Rome and beyond (1:10). Although he had never been to the imperial city, Paul longed to visit these believers and requested their assistance as he moved westward to Spain (15:23-24).

As it turned out, Paul did not arrive in Rome until about A.D. 60. He did not come as he had planned, though. Instead, Paul arrived in chains, a prisoner of the empire (Acts 23:11; 28:16, 30-31). Early tradition suggest that he was released from this imprisonment and traveled elsewhere later.

With regard to the origins of the church in Rome, we have little information. In all likelihood, the Christian faith was spread by Jews who were converted on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and then returned to their homes in Rome.

The Power of The Gospel-Romans 1:16-17

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because of the power contained in it. The word translated "power" in Romans 1:16 is *dunamis* in Greek, and is where we get the English words "dynamite" and "dynamo." The power of the gospel provides salvation from sin and the power necessary for living a life in faith.

1-Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel? (Romans 1:16)

Paul saw the gospel as a message that had to be proclaimed to both Jews and Greeks. That the gospel should be preached to the Jews first is understandable. Christ's ministry focused on His own Jewish people (Matt. 10:5-6; 15:24), and they have a privileged position in God's plan (Romans 9:1-5; 11:1-2).

2-Who did Paul preach to first and why? (Romans 1:16b)

Habakkuk 2:4 reads, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith." Paul stressed this single verse because the Jewish Talmud stated that the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Law could be summarized by this one verse.

3-Where else is the statement "The just shall live by faith" found (Romans 1:17)?

The Penalty for Ungodliness-Romans 1:18-20

Not only are divine attributes clearly seen in humanity, but they can also be seen in the material universe. Nature itself speaks eloquently of its Creator. From the intricate design of the human cell, to the majestic strength of the Rocky Mountains, all of God's works testify to His wisdom and power.

Some look at nature and theorize that it was the result of a cosmic accident, however, the evidence clearly points to a divine Creator. It takes much more faith to believe that our complex universe came about by chance than to believe it is the result of intelligent design (Genesis 1:1).

While the ultimate penalty for sin is hell, there are other penalties that are exacted upon those who disregard God's Word. Three times Paul declared that God gives sinners over to (or, gave them up to) their sinful choices (Romans 1:24,26,28), which are not without consequences in the present. It is because of their rejection of truth that people turn from God to evil (vss. 28-32).

4-Where do we find clear evidence of the existence of God? What is said about those who do not accept this evidence? (Romans 1:18-20)

The Pervasiveness of Sin-Romans 3:9-18

Paul showed that Jews were likewise under condemnation because of sin. He wanted to make it clear that *"both Jews and Greeks... are all under sin."* Greeks here refers to all non-Jews. Because God's Word is just as true then as it is today, this guilt of sin applies to us as well by default... we too, *"are all under sin."* We must remember that it does not matter: where we work or live, what model car we drive, how intellectual we are, where we have traveled, what languages we speak, what the color of our skin is, or what our political affiliations are, Romans 3:10 reminds us that, *"There is none righteous, no, not one."* Isaiah 64:6 further articulates, *"But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away."*

5-Who is "under sin?" (Romans 3:9)

Paul quoted from the book of Psalms (14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; and Isaiah 59:7-8) the most in these verses that speak of the mind, the tongue, the mouth, the feet, and the eyes. He did this to show that sin affects the whole person. The depravity of humanity is complete. That is why good works can never be the basis of our redemption (Ephesians 2:9). No amount of human effort can atone for sin.

6-What Old Testament book did Paul quote from most in verses 10-18?

The final passage quoted by Paul comes from Psalm 36:1. While there are some things that we should not fear, it is always right to fear God. As Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Sadly, there are few people who fear God in our world today. Where there is no fear of God, there is no fear of judgment either. Consequently, those who do not fear God will disobey His commands and treat others as if there were no day of reckoning. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, *"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."*

How can a God-fearing person be described? She would have a reverence for God, and a respect for His creations. She would dedicate her life to pleasing Him since she knows that she was created for His pleasure. She would mimic God's love for her by loving others-even those who seem unlovable. She would give praise and honor and worship to Him on a regular basis. She would talk to Him frequently and sincerely. And, she would develop godly character by behaving as though God knows all, sees all, and is all powerful.

7-Why is the fear of God so important? How would you describe a God-fearing person? (Romans 3:18)

The law usually refers to the Mosaic Law given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai, but it can also refer to the entire Old Testament. This seems to be the way Paul used the term in Romans 3:19-20. Since the law was given to the nation of Israel, it spoke primarily to them. Yet, the law could not save, it could only condemn (see Genesis 3:13).

8-Who does the law speak to?

The Purpose of the Law-Romans 3:19-20

The *"deeds of the law"* were the commandments and prohibitions contained in the Old Testament. In fact, Jewish rabbis had calculated that there were 365 negative precepts and 248 positive precepts in the Scriptures. Even though there were some (like the Pharisees) who thought that they kept the commandments flawlessly, no one had ever done so. No one could be saved by keeping the law-for no one has ever kept it, except Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:15). The purpose of the law was not to procure salvation, but to reveal our need for redemption.

9-Can the "deeds of the law" (vs. 20) justify? Why?

Paul stated one of the primary purposes of the Mosaic law: *"by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Romans 3:20b). Without a law to identify good or bad behavior, there is no standard by which actions can be judged. Since the law identified right and wrong, one of its purposes was to make people conscious of what sin is and condemn it (see Romans 7:7). Paul also declared that another purpose of the law was to lead us to Christ (see Galatians 3:24).

10-What was one of the major purposes of the law?

Conclusion

Romans 3:16-17 reads, *"Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known."* This is talking about man's nature. People apart from God are prone to violence. They murder and kill because they have no respect for the life of another.

There are no singular saints. None of us should try to go solo in faith's pilgrimage or toward faith's destination. In addition, there are not singular sinners. We have all fallen short of God's glory. And there is no superiority in sinners-big ones and little ones, favored ones and disdained ones. Both Jews and Gentiles are guilty. Both need a Savior. And both have a Savior.

Practical Points

- It is God's power, not ours, that provides salvation through faith in Christ (Romans 1:16-17).
- God's loving, caring nature is clearly demonstrated in His creation (vss. 18-20).
- Our sinful nature keeps us from actively seeking to know God (3:9-12).
- Ungodly words of anger and bitterness can lead to violence (vss. 13-16).
- There is no genuine, lasting peace for those who do not know God (vss. 17-18).
- God's perfect law show how we have failed to live up to His ideals for us (vss. 19-20).

Prayer

Help us, dear Father, to see our sin and the consequence of it. How thankful we are that we can rest in Jesus, Your Son, and our Savior. How thankful that we do not rest there alone, but in fellowship with others who name the Name. Thank You for providing the good news, for no one else could have provided an answer for our sin. Through Christ, our perfect Redeemer, we pray. Amen.

Thought to Remember

Instead of trying to cover up our sin on our own, let us allow Jesus' blood to cover it.