

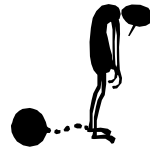


# Our Problem & God's Solution

Romans 3:9-26<sup>1</sup>

## Our Problem

- ❑ Romans 3:9-20 concludes the “bad news” that began in 1:18. Read Romans 3:9-20. Though the Jews were “entrusted with the very words of God” (3:2), they are on equal terms with the Gentiles (non-Jews) when it comes to God’s standard and judgment.
  1. Paul writes, “We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin”<sup>2</sup> (3:9, NIV84). What does it mean to be “under sin?”
- ❑ Paul’s point (that all are under sin) is confirmed by Old Testament Scripture (3:10-18).<sup>3</sup>
  2. Based on verses 10-18, what characteristics of humanity demonstrate its sinful condition? (3:12-17)<sup>4</sup>
  3. In general, what is the main problem with the human race? (3:11-12, 18)<sup>5</sup> How extensive is this problem? (3:10-11)
- ❑ In view of the evidence against human beings (including those with the Scriptures), they have no excuse. “Every mouth [is] silenced and the whole world is accountable to God” (3:19). No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the law, or by doing good works in general, because no one can meet God’s standard of righteousness (3:20).
  4. If human beings cannot achieve a right standing with God by observing “the law”, what purpose does “the law” serve?<sup>6</sup> What function is mentioned in verse 20?



<sup>1</sup> We have skipped over Romans 3:1-8. These verses address Jewish concerns that are more fully addressed later in Romans 9-11. If you have any questions about any skipped-over sections, please ask Jay.

<sup>2</sup> There are various ways to define ‘sin.’ One definition is ‘any action or attitude that is opposed to the authority and moral will of God.’ This coincides with the failure to honor God as God (1:21). ‘Sin’ can also refer to the condition of separation from God (that is, broken relationship) that arises from such opposition. Sin is also seen as a power. Sin ‘reigns’ (5:21; 6:12) and enslaves (6:6; 6:14). ‘Under sin’ could be translated ‘under the power (or dominion) of sin’ (3:9, NIV). In general, humanity is in bondage to sin, guilt, shame, and fear; and is subject to God’s judgment.

<sup>3</sup> Paul quotes (or adapts) several passages from the Old Testament as follows: 3:10-12 (Psalm 14:1-3); 3:13 (Psalm 5:9; 140:3b); 3:14 (Psalm 10:7); 3:15-17 (Isaiah 59:7-8a); 3:18 (Psalm 36:1b).

<sup>4</sup> Human sinfulness is evident in what we say (or write), including hateful, harmful, and deceiving words. (See James 3:1-12.) Human sinfulness is evident in our actions toward others, including injury, destruction, and killing. These are just some examples. There is much more evidence! In general, ‘no one...does good, not even one.’

<sup>5</sup> ‘All have turned away [from God]’ (3:12a). No one truly fears God (3:18). The ‘fear of God’ is acknowledgement of who God is, and a proper attitude toward Him. As stated earlier, people fail to honor God as God (1:21). These sinful attitudes lead to sinful actions, and are deserving of death (1:32). ‘Death’ is not just physical, but spiritual. Spiritual death is alienation from God, who is the Source of life. This condition extends to every human being.

<sup>6</sup> The law has several functions, but only one is mentioned here. When we compare our attitudes and actions with God’s standards of righteousness, our sins are revealed. Thus we see our need for God’s forgiveness and salvation.

### Reflection/Application

- Are you conscious of *your* sin? Toward others? Toward God? How do you measure your sin? Measure it against God's standards.

### God's Solution

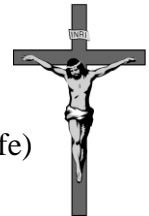
- ❑ "Our problem" is bad news. We need to be right with God. We need to be reconciled to God (restored to a relationship with God). But *we* cannot do it! Our best efforts still fall short.
- ❑ However, there is good news! As Paul writes, "But now..." **Read Romans 3:21-26.** "But now the righteousness of God has been [made known] apart from the law" (3:21, *ESV*; *cp.* 1:17).
- ❑ How can a person be right with God? How can a person be reconciled to God? How can a person receive salvation from his/her sinful condition and consequences?

#### God's Provision

- 📖 "justified<sup>7</sup> freely by his grace" (3:24a) – God declares sinful persons to be righteous (right with God) on the basis of the righteousness of Christ. This is a gift of God's grace.
- 📖 "...through the redemption<sup>8</sup> that came by Christ Jesus" (3:24b) – God redeems (liberates, sets free) persons "under sin." This redemption involves a "price" that must be paid.
- 📖 "God presented [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement<sup>9</sup> (3:25) – Jesus died for our sins (as a substitute). He took on himself our sin, and paid the "price" (death) so that we could be forgiven and set free. (Furthermore, his resurrection from the dead defeated sin & death.)
- 📖 "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:21, *NLT*).

#### How We Receive God's Provision

- 📖 "through faith in Jesus Christ" (3:22) – We receive the benefits of God's provision (justification, redemption, salvation, relationship with God, eternal life) through believing and trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.



5. What do you think of this "good news?" If it is difficult to accept, what are your questions or objections? If you accept this as "good news," in what ways is it good news?

- ❑ God is holy, righteous and just. Sin *must* be punished. God is also gracious and merciful. So God provided a way to satisfy his holy justice and *also* provide a way of salvation for sinful humans. Thus God is "just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (3:26).

### Reflection/Application

- Carefully consider question 5. If you have not accepted the "good news," identify your questions or objections, and seek answers. If you believe this is good news, but you have not responded in faith, do so! If you have already received Christ, identify the attitudes that you *should have* toward God, about yourself, and toward others in light of the good news.

<sup>7</sup> 'justify' (*dikaioō*) – in this context, for God to 'declare one righteous' based on the righteousness of Christ.

<sup>8</sup> 'redemption' (*apolutrōsis*) – in this context, basically, 'liberation through payment of a price.' God's redemption involves the price He paid to set sinful people free (to rescue them, or save them), so that they might be reconciled to Him. The 'price' (or 'ransom') is Jesus Christ's blood, that is, his death (3:25, Ephesians 1:7). See footnote 9.

<sup>9</sup> 'sacrifice of atonement' (*hilastērion*) – 'propitiation;' the 'price' required to satisfy God's justice. Sin requires death. Jesus Christ paid the price by dying for our sin. Only Jesus, as the Son of God, was qualified to do this. Only Jesus was 'without sin' (Heb. 4:15). Only he is 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29).