

The Gospel in Romans WVEC 12\5\2013
Sermon 14 Reading Matthew 15 v 1 - 20
Romans 3 v 9 -18 The Problem of Universal Sin
Read Romans 3 v 9 - 18

This morning we come to a new section in Paul's letter to the believers in Rome. He is drawing together all the points that he has made so far in the letter concerning human beings biggest problem. Now what would that be? According to one source, a recent survey taken across Europe, these are the 10 most serious problems that concern people - 1. Poverty and hunger. 2. Climate change. 3. The economic situation. 4. International terrorism. 5. Availability of energy. 6. Increasing global population. 7. Spread of Infectious diseases tied with Armed conflict 9. Proliferation of Nuclear weapons and 10. 2% said they didn't know. ¹ Are these the biggest problem for the people of this world? Well - each of them are big - but are any of them the biggest?

Paul is going to tell us what is the most serious problem - a universal problem of such magnitude that it cannot be solved by money, legislation or education - nor an organisation like the EU!

It is the problem that God the creator has a case against the race that He has made! The **heathen**, the **hypocrite** and the **Hebrew** - each have been brought into God's scrutiny - as the mighty judge that He is - and have been pronounced guilty! My friend like it or not you fit into one of theses categories!

If you are not a Jew then **Hebrew** does not describe you. But if you profess a religious faith, a lifestyle which is religious and yet that faith is not acceptable to God, you are classed as a **Hypocrite**.

Or if you have no faith this morning you are seen by the Lord God as a **Heathen**.

Each of these 3 categories of people have already been covered in the first 2 chapters.

Now Paul brings them all together without distinction and describes the UNIVERSALITY OF SIN.

1. First of all he comes to a **CONCLUSION - THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE UNDER SIN.** Verse 9

2. Then he goes on to outline the **CHARACTER OF MEN IN SIN.** (Let me add an explanation - for MEN read men and women, boys and girls. All human beings - men is shorthand) Verses 10 and 11

3. Then the **CONVERSATION OF MEN IN SIN.**

Verse 13 - 14

4. And after that the **CONDUCT OF MEN IN SIN.**

Verse 15 - 18

So this is how we are going to look at these verses. Before doing so then let us just look back to Jesus' words in Matthew 15 - the Pharisees had criticised the disciples for not ceremonially washing their hands before eating bread. They believed that holiness and acceptance with God depended entirely on what you did. It was an outward demonstration of rituals and habits that saved a person.

Not so said the Lord Jesus Christ - it is a matter of the heart! 10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

The disciples had not got it! Peter asked for an explanation. The Lord Jesus gave it to him - 15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the **heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Man's heart is the problem - it is defiled - it is corrupt - it is marked by depravity - and every human child ever conceived has the problem! Character, conversation and conduct are all affected by SIN. It is a family thing - the human family. We have all inherited Adam's sinfulness - and no one is excepted. So turning to Romans 3 v 9 -

1. First of all he comes to a CONCLUSION - THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE UNDER SIN.

9 What then? are we Christians better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

All men are on the same footing before God when it comes to the matter of sin. Jew and gentiles - oriental and western, red and yellow, black and white skinned - there is no difference - all men are sinners in the sight of God. Paul asks a question - Are we any better than the Jews? Of course Paul was now speaking as a Christian - a converted Jew - he identifies with the Christians at Rome amongst whom were other converted Jews. Do we Christians have any special merit with God - in order to outshine them somehow? No, says Paul - we Christians do not have an intrinsically superior nature to those whom he has shown to stand under God's condemnation. We are all completely enslaved by sin. Sin has dominated us. And we are all guilty before God. Have you ever had a conversation which goes along these lines. You are talking to a friend and it gets round to religion, the Bible and God. How soon is it when these key words have been uttered that your friend says to you, "I am not a bad person!" Have you ever thought to reply, "By what standard! With whom are you comparing yourself? Well, he replies, "There are many more who are worse than I am." So - his standard is the people who fill the prisons; the cheats and frauds, rapists and murderers, bombers and assassins - he is not as bad as them! This of course is true - as it is for you my friend - and me. But there is a flaw in the argument. The Lord God does not compare us to each other! He compares us to His perfect Son the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the standard against whom we are measured. If fact God is

looking for men and women who are as good as Christ. Is He going to find any?

No says Paul - because all mankind is under sin. PANTES OOF HARMARTIAN - Greek words in the original of verse 9 - **all under sin**. All dominated by sin. By nature our hearts are under the power of sin. Are we convinced of this my friends? Is Paul right about us and the sinful states of our hearts? Take a few moments of honest reflection this morning and ask yourself, Am I a sinner? Have I broken God's Holy laws? Am I deserving of punishment? How do you answer?

We need some humility this morning.

In the face of God's Glory I am left naked with no glory whatsoever to hold before myself or anyone else. As long as I am comparing myself to others, I can always find someone whose existence seems to be an argument for how righteous I am.

But if I compare the filthy rags of my righteousness to the pure and forever untainted linen of God's righteousness, I want to run and hide in heartbreaking shame! (2)

When did any of us run and hide from God's glorious presence in heartbreaking shame? Every sin that we commit should drive us there - and then to throw ourselves at Christ's feet for mercy, pardon and forgiveness.

Paul now sets out to prove that it is indeed true about us all!

2. The CHARACTER OF MEN IN SIN. (Let me add an explanation - for MEN read 'men and women,' boys and girls. All human beings - men is shorthand) 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

The key phrase here is IT IS WRITTEN. Paul does not appeal to opinion or the teaching of famous theologians. He does not appeal to tradition or developing philosophies. He goes to the Bible. He goes to God's word - God's thoughts about us and the world that he has made. It is written - it says here... he quotes from the OT scriptures. There is a children's hymn that says 'Jesus loves me this I know, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO!' Children love to sing it. But what is not said is this, 'I'm a sinner, this I know - for the Bible tells me so!'

1. **There is none righteous,** no, not one: this comes from Ecclesiastes 7 v 20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

A striking feature of the text that Paul selects no less than 4 scriptures that use these words - **THERE IS NONE.** This is the 1st - there is none righteous. That is none who possess a righteousness that can meet the demands of God's Holy law - all have broken the law and are guilty.

2. v11 **There is none** that understandeth, this comes from Psalm 53 v 2 God looked down from heaven upon

the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God. It is true of every human individual - that we are naturally alienated from God because we don't understand Him! How many people do you know who have said that to you? It may be that you are treasuring such thoughts in your mind now - I don't understand God. It is as if our human understanding is darkened and ignorant. And connected with this - the next one -

3. v11 **there is none** that seeketh after God. Again Psalm 53 has that thought - God looked to see if anyone was seeking Him and were ready to call upon him. True wisdom is seeking God for help, for happiness, and for wisdom itself. God is available to men - but they do not naturally seek Him. They strive to make their way in life on their own. Is that what you are doing this morning? You suppose that you can make it by yourself, living by your wits and your own standards?

4. v12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; **there is none** that doeth good, no, not one. Sin is a wandering or a departure from the right way - the way of human duty - which principally is to live by God's law. The man who abandons God's law and walks his own way cannot restore himself and will face the eternal judgment in hell if he dies in that state. And no one comes up to these requirements . Some think that they can - some of the

Pharisees thought they could. Some monks and nuns think that they can by secluding themselves and the temptations of the world. But they take their depravity into seclusion with them - remember it is the heart that is the problem! Paul emphasises these 4 by saying no, not one! No not one - in verse 10 and this verse.

This is our character my friends. We are sinners by nature. And amongst all human beings who have ever lived not one has ever been found that is not a sinner - a law breaker.

Which is why the Lord Jesus Christ came to do and be just that! Perfect - abiding by God's law - fulfilling all the objects of the law - so much so that the father testified of the Lord This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. God was pleased with His son because He kept the Father's law - perfectly.

Don't we fathers praise our sons when they have done right and kept the laws that you have made for them? Doesn't an obedient child bring pleasure to the parent?

We need a relationship with this perfect person to have any hope of pleasing God! Conclusion, Character - now

3. The CONVERSATION OF MEN IN SIN. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

From the general points Paul turns to specifics about men in sin. The way that sinners speak is highlighted. He quotes from Psalm 5 v 9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their

throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. And Psalm 140 v 3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. In the East funerals were conducted within a few hours of the death of the individual. This was because the hot climate led to rapid discomposure of the body and a nasty odour! The account of Lazarus makes mention of this in John's gospel. So graves were dug and burial quickly took place - except in the case where the burial was in a tomb - a sepulchre. These structures were elaborate but had the capacity to be sealed allowing no air to get in or out. So the description OPEN SUPULCHRE for the mouth of the sinner is very graphic. Just as a foul stench would issue from an open sepulchre with a dead body in it - so does it aptly describe the filthy conversation of wicked people. Flattery, gossip, foul language, deceit and insult are a stench as far as God is concerned. More than this words can be poisonous. Slanderers can destroy the reputations of others. The tongue is a powerful tool in the sinners equipment. Psalm 10 v 7 is quoted in verse 14 - 7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. How sinful our tongues can be - they can say foul things in cursing and swearing; they can deceive telling lies and half truths; they can pierce others souls with false accusations and much more. Such things cause bitterness of soul - it is the outward expression of the depravity within the sinful soul.

Our Saviour was different. He spoke perfect words. They were all measured - they were never wasted. No insults; always truthful; designed to build up; sometimes to challenge and sometimes rebuke - nevertheless motivated by love and compassion. His words were perfect words. If only we would listen to Him! He has said, Ye believe in God believe also in me! He has said You must be born again. He has said repent and believe. These are saving words - Have you heard them my friend? Have you acted on them? Have you turned from your sins in repentance? Have you believed in Him who died for sinners? Have you realised the power of your tongue and your words, that they condemn you when heard by the Lord God?

4. The CONDUCT OF MEN IN SIN. After writing of men in their sinfulness as shown by their words now Paul deals with sinful actions in v 15 - 18.

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Paul continues to quote from scripture - Isaiah 59 v 7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. And Proverbs 1 v 16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. We are seeing today the ease with which some men are prepared to take the lives of others for their own evil ends. They are not restrained by any thoughts

of the good of society or even for fear of the laws of the country in which they live. So it has been down the ages of human history. Men seek to destroy each other. This is not merely in physical conflicts in wars and terrorism - but in board rooms of companies; in relationships - misery can be inflicted by sinful people wishing only to destroy what is good.

We could say much more about the conduct of sinful people. But my friend we are all familiar with it. It is well documented in newspapers and the other media. We are bombarded with it every day. A sinful world of human beings behaving in sinful ways day in and day out! So summing up Paul quotes one more scripture - Psalm 36 v 1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

One of the distinguishing features of a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is that there is a genuine fear of God. When you are converted you have a different attitude to the Lord God.

In these verses in Romans 3 we have seen that the depravity of man's heart affects every department. God brings a general charge of unrighteousness. Then he shows that our hearts are ruined by sin; this leads to expressions of unrighteousness through our mouths and finally our actions in day to day life are tainted with sin.

In this God accuses ALL of us in this place today!

So what hope is there for things to get any better? How can we escape the justice of God who has every right to destroy us in eternal hell?

The hope is in this - that God Himself came - with the name Man of Sorrows! He came to reclaim ruined sinners like us. He came to die in the place of those who had broken His laws. He came to die a cruel death of crucifixion - and to die as an offering for sin on the behalf of others - those who became aware of their sin, and repented of it - and yielded to Him. Does this describe you my friend? He knows of your depravity - that is why He came - to cleanse and to pardon and to forgive! His blood can make the foulest clean - and is available today!

1. <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-10-biggest-problems-in-the-world-according-to-the-eu-2011-10?op=1> The 10 Biggest Problems In The World According To The EU

Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-10-biggest-problems-in-the-world-according-to-the-eu-2011-10?op=1#ixzz2SzTcVbxK>

2. Paul David Tripp - Dangerous calling. Page 121