

WHY THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

Romans 3:9-20

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Today we are getting back into our study of the book of Romans, or the epistle of Romans, or the letter of Romans.
2. I want to remind you of a few things about the book of Romans.
3. It was written by the apostle Paul, the author of thirteen New Testament books.
4. Romans is a letter written to the church in Rome about 57 AD, less than thirty years after Christ's resurrection.
5. Romans is a very important book in the Bible.
 - i. **William Tyndale** "[Romans is] the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament."
 - ii. **Jl Packer** "Paul's letter to Rome is the high peak of Scripture."
6. The key passage in Romans is Romans 1:16-17.
7. **Romans 1:16-17** 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.
8. Romans is all about the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ. In the very next verse, Romans 1:18, Paul begins to explain the gospel. And the way he does it is important. He begins with the bad news. What's the bad news? The bad news is that people desperately need salvation from sin. Paul spends 1:18-3:20 to draw this out. Why? The gospel doesn't make sense unless you first understand the bad news. The good news of Jesus Christ is not good news unless you understand the bad news.
9. For example, imagine that I said to you, "Hey, they discovered the cure!" Is that good news you? Not really. For that news to be good news, you need to know the bad news. The bad news is that a terrible disease exists, and you have it. Suddenly, my news has just become good news! Paul begins with the bad news because if you don't understand the bad news, then you can't understand why the gospel is good news.

10. In other words, the bad news is the reason the good news is good news.

The reason the gospel is the gospel is because of the bad news.

11. Here's why this is so important. If you don't know why the gospel is good news, then you can't become a Christian, because you won't see the need to run to Jesus and depend on Him for salvation. If you don't know why the gospel is good news, then you can't love and obey God the way you should, because we love because He first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). The reason we love God is because of all that saved us from. If you don't know why the gospel is good news, then you can't worship and praise and thank God with passion. If you don't know why the gospel is good news, then you're not going to have the desire to evangelize the world; you're not going to have much interest in church planting and world missions. It is so central that you understand why the gospel is good news. And the gospel is good news because of the bad news – people desperately need salvation from sin.

12. So, in Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul discusses the bad news. He begins by explaining why pagans need a savior (1:18-32); then he explains why self-righteous people need a savior (2:1-16); then he explains why the Jews need a savior (2:17-29). And in our passage today, he is going to make his closing argument by explaining why every single person in the world needs a savior.

II. TEXT: Romans 3:9-20

9 What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, 10 as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. 11 There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. 13 Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers' venom is under their lips. 14 Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, 17 and the path of peace they have not known. 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes. 19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are subject to the law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God's judgment. 20 For no one will be

justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law.

III. **THREE REASONS YOU NEED A SAVIOR**

1. **You are a sinner.**

- i. **Romans 1:9** What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.
- ii. “Are we better off”?
 1. Paul is now talking about Christians. He already shown that pagans, self-righteous people, and Jews need a savior. What about Christians? Are by nature better than everyone else? No. We too need a savior? Why?
- iii. “both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.”
 1. Everyone, even Christians, need a Savior, because we are all under sin.
 2. What does “under sin” mean? It literally means under sin’s power or dominion, but Paul explains what it means to be under sin in **verses 10-18**.
- iv. **Romans 3:10-18** 10 as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. 11 There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. 13 Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers’ venom is under their lips. 14 Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, 17 and the path of peace they have not known. 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.
- v. In this section Paul is arguing from Scripture (“as it is written”) – the Old Testament – that all people are under sin. He strings together several passages of the Old Testament – from Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and Isaiah (Eccl 7:20; Ps 14:2-3; Ps 5:9; Ps 140:3; Ps 10:7; Is 59:7-8; Ps 36:1).
- vi. We can summarize these verses with two thoughts:
 1. All people are sinners.
 - a. Do you remember what sin is? We discussed it last week. 1 John 3:4 says that “sin is lawless.” So, sin is

any failure to obey God's commands, either by commission or omission. A sin of commission is when you do what is wrong, and a sin of omission is when you fail to do what is right.

- b. Paul is making the case for the universality of sin.
- c. Everyone is a sinner, and that includes you.
- d. Notice how many times Paul uses all-inclusive language with words like "no one" (four times), "not even one" (two times), and "all" (two times).
- e. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rm 3:23).
- f. Billy Graham is a sinner. Mother Theresa is a sinner. President Trump is a sinner. Every human being who has ever lived, except for Jesus Christ, is a sinner.

2. All people are very sinful.

- a. Most people would agree with the first point; they would admit that they have sinned. But then they would claim to be good. "I'm not perfect, but I'm a good person."
- b. Paul's argument here is that no, you're not a good person. The Bible doesn't just say that nobody is perfect, it says that nobody is good. There are no good people. Everyone is bad.
 - i. V. 10 – no one is righteous.
 - ii. V. 11 – no one seeks God (on their own).
 - iii. V. 12 – all have turned away. This phrase means that everyone has deliberately avoided God (Leon Morris).
 - iv. V. 12 – no one does what is good.
- c. Then to be even clearer Paul says that every part of you is sinful.
 - i. Your mind is sinful. V. 11, "There is no one who understands." You don't even understand how sinful you are.

- ii. Your desires are sinful. V. 11, “there is no one who seeks God.” You don’t want to please God.
- iii. Your tongue is sinful. He spends more time on the tongue than anything else, because nobody can deny that they have sinned greatly with their words (James 3:8). He says your throat is sinful (v. 13), your tongue is sinful (v. 13), your lips are sinful (v. 13), and your mouth is sinful (v. 14).
- iv. Your feet are sinful. V. 15, “Their feet are swift to shed blood.” This refers to your actions general.
- v. Your attitude is sinful. V. 18, “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” You don’t care that God is always watching, He can smite you at any moment, and He will ultimately hold you accountable on the day of judgment.
- vii. With Scripture as his authority, Paul is making that case that you are a sinner, and you are very sinful. But that’s not the only reason you need a Savior. There are two more.

2. You are headed for judgment.

- i. **Romans 3:19** Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are subject to the law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God’s judgment.
- ii. “Now we know that whatever the law says,”
 - 1. By “the law” Paul is referring to the passages that OT passages that he just quoted. Sometimes the Jews referred to the entire OT as “the law” and not just the Torah (Gen-Deut) because there are binding commands throughout the Old Testament.
- iii. “it speaks to those who are subject to the law”
 - 1. Who is subject to the law of God? Only the Jews? No. Everyone is subject to God’s law. God’s word is speaks to every one and is authoritative over everyone.

2. Paul is saying that the verses he just quoted apply to everyone. This is made clear by the next statement.
- iv. “so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God’s judgment.”
 1. Because everyone is a sinner, everyone is subject to God’s judgment.
 2. Apart from Christ, you are subject to God’s judgment. I am subject to God’s judgment.
- v. What does it mean to be subject to God’s judgment?
 1. It means that you have sinned and will one day have to answer to God for it.
- vi. Paul has already been talking about the final judgment.
- vii. **Romans 1:18** For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth
 1. What is God’s wrath? It is His hatred of sin and his determination to punish it.
 2. God’s wrath is against all godlessness and unrighteousness.
 3. God hates your sin and is determined to punish it.
 4. Paul tells us more about God’s wrath a few verses later.
- viii. **Romans 2:5** Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed.
 1. God’s wrath, His punishment against sin, will ultimately be poured out “in the day of wrath.”
 2. There is coming a “day of wrath,” a day of judgment and punishment.
 3. The Bible says this will happen when Jesus comes back (Mt 25:31-32), and Jesus will be the judge.
- ix. **2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
 1. On the day of judgment, God will punish everyone for their sins.
- x. That brings up a question: What is the punishment for sin?

- xi. **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death
 - 1. The punishment for sin is death; not merely physical death, but spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God in hell.
- xii. **2 Thessalonians 1:9** They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction from the Lord's presence and from his glorious strength
- xiii. Are you starting to get the picture? So far Paul has argued that you need a Savior for two reasons. First, you are a sinner, and second, you have an appointment at the final judgment when you will be sent to hell for all eternity.
- xiv. Many people object to the idea hell. Instinctively we believe that the punishment should fit the crime, and on the surface you may not think your sin deserves eternal hell. But that's because you don't understand the sinfulness of sin. To understand the severity of sin you have to understand what sin is, and who it is committed against.
- xv. First, what is sin? We already said that it is any failure to obey God's commands, either by commission or omission. But it is more than that. It is essentially wishing that God would stop being God. It is wishing that God was dead. We saw this last week in a quote by Albert Mohler.
- xvi. **Theologian Al Mohler** "Christian, your sin amounts to nothing less than a desire for God to cease being God. Your sin rebels as cosmic treason. Your sin against God beckons him to step off his throne that you might ascend its steps. Your sin wishes the Creator to relinquish his rightful rule and claim to glory and give way to your will." (The Apostles' Creed, 174.)
- xvii. Second, who is sin committed against? Every time you sin, even if you sin against another human being, it is a sin against God. After David committed adultery he prayed to God, "Against you – you alone – have I sinned and done this evil in your sight (Ps 51:4)."
- xviii. The severity of the crime is measured by who it is committed against. For example, if I were to rip the legs off of a baby doll, you probably wouldn't say that was evil. If I ripped the legs off of

a beautiful butterfly, you probably wouldn't call me evil, but you would question my sanity. If I ripped the legs off of a rabbit, you would call me evil. If I ripped the legs off of a puppy, you would say that I was very evil. And if I ripped the legs off of an infant, you would say that I was extremely evil. The severity of the crime is measured by who it is committed against. When you sin, you don't just sin against people, you sin against God. And who is God? God is creator and ruler of the universe. He is almighty, all-knowing, all-present, and perfectly holy and good. There is no evil in Him. He made you, breathed life into you, keeps you alive, and has sent His Son to die for your sins. In other words, you owe everything to Him. That's who you have sinned against, and the punishment is severe.

xix. But Paul is not finished. There's another reason you need a Savior.

3. You cannot save yourself.

- i. **Romans 3:20** For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law.
- ii. Paul says two important things in this verse.
- iii. First, "no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law."
 1. To be "justified" is to be acquitted, or declared innocent, or let off the hook.
 2. "the works of the law" refers to obeying God's commands.
 3. Remember, you have an appointment with the final judgment. This verse says that no one will be acquitted or let off the hook because they were obedient to God. Why not? Because no one has been obedient. No one is innocent.
 4. Some people think that you don't have to be perfect to go to heaven, you just have to be good enough. There are a couple of problems with this.
 5. First, how good is good enough? Let me guess, good enough is however good you are. Nobody knows how good is good enough. In reality, God doesn't grade on a scale. He doesn't compare you to everyone else, and as long as you are in the top seventy percent of do-gooders you get to go

to heaven. God compares you to Himself – absolute moral perfection.

6. Second, it is unbiblical. The Bible doesn't teach that you just need to be "good enough." It's not there. Jesus said that the only people who can go to heaven are those who do God's will (Mt 7:21). Have you done God's will – without fail? I haven't.
 7. When Paul says, "no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law," he is saying that you can't earn your way to heaven. There is nothing you can do to deserve it.
 8. Do you know why? Because of the first two points that Paul has made. It has already been established that you are a sinner, and you deserve eternal punishment. So if God were to give you what you deserve, what you have earned, it would be hell.
 9. You might say, "But I've done a lot of good things; doesn't that amount to something." That's like committing murder and then telling the judge, "It would be fair to punish me, because I have done a lot of good things in my life." Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that you have done a lot of good things in your life; you are still a sinner, and you deserve eternal punishment.
 10. So, first, Paul is saying that you can't earn your way to heaven by obeying God's law.
- iv. Second, "because the knowledge of sin comes through the law."
1. The more you know about the law, the more you see how sinful you really are.
 2. If you think you are a decent person who deserves to go to heaven, it's because you don't know much about God's law. You don't know much about God.
 3. The more you see who God wants you to be, and how He wants you to live, and the more you understand His character that He wants you to imitate, the more you will come to see how sinful you really are.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. The theme of Romans is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. To explain it, Paul begins with the bad news, because you can't understand the good news until you first understand the bad news. The bad news is the what makes the gospel good news.
2. What is the bad news? You desperately need salvation from sin.
3. Paul makes this argument in this passage with three points:
 - i. You are a sinner.
 - ii. You are headed for judgment.
 - iii. You cannot save yourself.
4. Only when you understand the bad news are you ready for the good news.
5. What's the good news? Well, we'll get into that more next week, but in a nutshell it is this: **1 Timothy 1:15** "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You are headed for eternal destruction; you deserve eternal destruction; yet Christ came to save sinners like you. He died on the cross for your sins, and if you will repent of your sins and believe in Him, you can be saved. That's the gospel – the good news – and when you compare it with the bad news, it is the best news the world has ever heard.
6. You can be saved today, receiving forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life today. How? Admit you are a sinner, believe in Jesus, and call on Him to save you.