***The Final Verdict
RO19-02***

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We invite you to open your Bibles to Romans 3:9. Our subject is "The Final Verdict."

Thus far in the book of Romans, Paul's main point has been that every human being needs absolute righteousness. He has systematically shown this to be true for the immoral person; he has shown this to be true for the moral person; and, he has shown this to be true for the religious person. Every one of these individuals, as unbelievers, lacks absolute righteousness. All three types, therefore, are equally lost. Without absolute righteousness accredited to your account, you cannot expect eternal life. Nobody can go to heaven.

Now, beginning at Romans 3:9-20, the apostle Paul summarizes everything that he has said up to this point. Then, beginning with Romans 3:21, we really begin the study of the book of Romans. At Romans 3:21, he begins the formal dissertation (the formal declaration) of what God has done to meet the impossible condition that all human beings have of meeting absolute righteousness. That means to be as good as God is. That means to be as perfect as Jesus Christ. And God has a solution for that problem.

So, now he summarizes, in verse 19-20, bringing it all together before he takes up the solution to mankind's universal condemnation. Today, the same issue of universal guilt must be made to these three categories of people. Unbelievers try to defend themselves by claiming one popular thing, and that is that we as human beings are limited. The word for that is "finite." And God is unlimited. He is infinite. So, it is a popular thing among unbelievers to say: "Because we are limited, we cannot understand such a concept as an unlimited God. Because we are finite, we cannot understand an infinite God. Because we are finite, an infinite God cannot communicate to us." Therefore, they try to make the problem of mankind's separation from God a matter of ignorance. This is a very subtle cover-up.

The unbeliever says, "I am what I am because of ignorance." Well, the truth of the matter is that we are what we are because of sin. We have something within us that is extremely contaminated. We have something down deep within us that has totally separated us from God's thinking. The issue is not just ignorance. The issue is that we are evil. We have inherent sin.

The reason the unbeliever tries to take this approach that its ignorance is because he wants to make it a psychological problem. He says, "It's just a matter of what I know and what I don't know. While I'm going around stealing, it's because I don't have enough education. While I go around killing people, it's just because I haven't developed my understanding. While I'm a vile, immoral person, it's because I lack certain concepts. I'm ignorant." And they make these things a matter of psychological shortcomings.

**Today's Thinking about the Bible**

We can't communicate the gospel to unbelievers unless we understand the fact that that's how they think. In the 20th century, this is how people think about God. This is how they think about sin. This is how they think about the Bible. They have grossly distorted reality. Unless you understand how people think about God today; how they think about the Bible; and, how they think about sin, you will talk to them, and you think you're saying one thing, but when they listen to your words, they interpret it in a totally different frame of reference (in a totally different way).

So, we have this problem, in the latter part of the 20th century in which we live, of communicating to unbelievers in a day when they no longer regard the Bible as having any authority at all. This can be illustrated anytime you listen (for example, on a television talk show) to a discussion about a moral issue. Suppose that you were listening to something about capital punishment, or about abortion, or about any number of issues that deal with moral matters, you will notice, if you watch carefully, that the Bible is never brought into the discussion. Even in the history of television, I can remember the same kinds of programs that when those subjects were discussed 15 years ago or so, the Bible was always brought in: "Well, here's what the Bible says about that." And people had to either accept it; ignore it; discard it; or, dispose of it.

Now, the Bible doesn't even come into the picture. When you talk to people who are not believers, you must understand that if you get up and you quote a Scripture verse to them, that doesn't mean anything. That doesn't mean a thing. It doesn't do any good for you to say, "Well, I'm going to read you John 3:16 to show you that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He looks at you and says, "Yeah, OK. So, that's what you think." And you have made absolutely no impact. It is important to recognize that that's how people look upon the Bible.

**Today's Thinking about Sin**

When it comes to sin, our whole standard of morality is obviously reflected even on television. Television is increasingly becoming more degrading to those who watch it. Television increasingly condones, justifies, and tolerates evil of every kind. Now, things are being shown on the television screen (which obviously is going to go into the home), that only a few years ago were restricted simply to the movie theater. It's not going to get better. It's going to get worse. The kinds of things that are in the X-rated category on the movie screens and the movie theaters are gradually going to come more and more into the television picture.

This, again, is a sign that we are moving toward the end of the age. We are moving toward the tribulation condition. During the tribulation, everything that is shown in the X-rated movies, of the most obscene, pornographic type of material, will be shown on home television. It will be common fare during the tribulation for you to tune that in. But that does not happen overnight. Everything that takes place in the tribulation period is a gradual development within society – accepting a little more; a little more; and, a little more of that which the Bible condemns, and which was once rejected by society, but now is increasingly accepted. So, when the rapture takes place, the world is going to be terrifically ripe for the outburst of evil because the Holy Spirit will then be gone; He will remove His restraints; and, man will be plunged into the full expression of the sin nature that now He holds back. And society, as it had respected the Bible, once held back the expression of sin publicly.

This is the problem. Man has inherent evil. He doesn't just have a problem of ignorance. It's not just a problem of something he doesn't understand. It's not just a problem of not knowing himself. It is a problem of internal contamination. And everybody has it.

The apostle Paul, in the opening part of Romans, has tried to demonstrate that very clearly. He says, "I'm not going to talk to you about the Bible." In a couple of places, he refers to Scripture verses, but he really doesn't quote Scripture before he gets out to verse 9. And he doesn't begin to quote Scripture. He just says, "I want to show you that you have a conscience, and you know that you ought to be a certain kind of person. That conscience tells you that you should live according to a certain standard. You should not do some of the things you do, and you should do some of the things you fail to do. You know that you don't live up to what you in yourself know you ought to be. He's just talking to people on the basis of what their own sense of judgment tells them about themselves. Every person who has any honesty with himself, not putting on a front, will say, "Yes, I have a sense of what I ought to be. I am very conscious of the fact that I am not that." Every unbeliever will say, "Yeah, I'm not everything I should be." He will readily admit his failure.

Now, Paul says, "I'll start with that. I'll start with your admission that, even by your own standards, you admit that you stand before God under condemnation. Then I'll get to the Bible and show you how the Bible says that you're right in your confusion about yourself, and the Bible will explain to you just how right you are. And you will discover that it's even worse than you thought it was. Your position is even more horrendous in the sight of a holy God than you may think.

So, to communicate the gospel to 20th century unbelievers, who have grossly distorted reality relative to God; relative to sin; and, relative to the Bible, it is necessary for us to begin with what their own conscience has to say to them in condemnation of what they themselves know they ought to be.

In other words, we are fighting their human viewpoint. But I want to caution you at this point that we Christians must be careful not to pick up the human viewpoint of unbelievers (the very people that we are trying to minister to), so that we try to minister to them on human viewpoint principles. The apostle Paul is not giving any Mickey Mouse approach here to people who are headed for hell. The apostle Paul, in a very dignified; a very scriptural; and, a very sound doctrinal way, is going to teach people how to escape the lake of fire. We pick up human viewpoint approaches to this same ministry that we are called to.

We do it in evangelism. We get huge stadiums full of people together. Then, like a bunch of tail-wagging female cheerleaders, we get some people out in the field, and we go through cheerleading routines in the name of Jesus. Here in the Cotton Bowl not so long ago, they had a bunch like that, and they were shouting, "Give me a 'J.'" And the crowd responded with a "J." And they shouted, "Give me an 'E.'" And the crowd responded with an "E." And they went through a little routine about the name of Jesus. What are they telling? They're trying to tell us that if you can get into the swing of responding to the cheerleaders out there, you're going to come close to Jesus.

That is a human viewpoint destruction that we have picked up, because that's how we do it at a football game. That's how we build a spirit for something. We build a spirit of enthusiasm by cheerleading techniques. And that is not going to bring anybody to the Lord. Dr. Francis Schaeffer has pointed out that one of the words that always stops him in speaking with people is when the word "Jesus" passes their lips. When the word "Jesus" passes their lips, he says, "All my antenna go up, and all my sensing devices go out, and I analyze what that person means by "Jesus," because unless it is the Jesus with solid doctrinal content, such as Paul presents in the book of Romans, that Jesus is meaningless. It is Satan's way of imposing human viewpoint attitudes on the name of Jesus that causes a person to go straight into hell. That is the devil in his finest hour – to be able to take the name of Jesus, and turn a person in the direction of hell. And he does it, because of the human viewpoint techniques that we use to try to witness to people.

I better caution you that the devil does this with you as a believer. Those of you that are solid devotees of the students of Bible doctrine, I'm going to tell you right now that Bible doctrine takes more people away from the Lord than you can imagine. It is the person who is really solid and hot on Bible doctrine that the devil can put the hooks into, and draw him away completely from the Lord, and send him off chasing personal ambitions, and will-of-the-wisp visions of his own, and completely draw him away from the real productive Christian life that he may have had when he didn't know so much doctrine. There is an inherent danger of those who progress in doctrine, or who become so obsessed with being learners of doctrine, that they go completely afield from productivity in the Christian life. Doctrine has to have solid content, but doctrine has to have application in performance, and doctrine has to be received with humility.

When you get yourself going in the Word of God, what doctrine does for you is that it gives you a head of steam. It gets you really rolling in the Christian life. Nothing else will. Doctrine is very important. That's what builds up the pressure. That's what builds up the steam that gets the whole system rolling. But the thing we forget, and that Satan tries to make you forget, is that unless you keep the steam coming, and more steam developing, you're going to run out of steam. While you have chased off thinking that your doctrine has got you going, what it will do is cause you to veer off in the wrong direction, away from the things of God. You cannot continue on that. You have to stay faithful to it. You have to make the application.

So, Satan has a way of taking our devotion to doctrine, and causing us actually to go off away from the things of the Lord, because we've become captivated by the practice rather than the reality that those things represent.

So, if we're going to ministry in the 20th century (and this is what Paul is trying to do here – he's trying to be very realistic), we have to understand that we must avoid human viewpoint thinking.

**Prayer**

For example, our society doesn't think much of prayer. Our society thinks that God is someplace way off. Therefore, the average unbeliever doesn't think prayer means very much. Have you picked up that idea? You might say, "No, I don't think that." You don't think that prayer is a kind of a chasing of a bubble operation that is going to burst, do you? "No, I don't believe that." You think that God is out there and He's listening. "Oh, sure." You haven't picked up this human viewpoint attitude that it's not going to do any good to pray anyhow. "No, I haven't picked that attitude up." Well, how much have you prayed this week then? How often have you stopped and had a time of prayer with just you and God? How faithful have you been last year in attending this church prayer meeting? How faithful will you be in attending it this year?

Your doctors might say to you, "You have a disease, and you're going to be dead in 24 hours." You might say, "I've got a lot to do. Is there nothing you can do for me?" The doctor says, "Yes, there is this medicine. It has just been developed. If you will take one teaspoon every morning, you will live for another 24 hours. But if you miss taking it at 9 o'clock in the morning, you'll be dead by the next day." What would you do if you believed your doctor? The first thing you would do is you would buy a three-ton truck. The next thing you would do is go to the pharmacy, and you would wipe out their warehouse of this particular medicine. And you would just haul it, and you would put it all over the house. You'd put it in the kitchen; you'd put it in the knickknack shelf; you'd put it in the front room; and, you'd put it in the bathroom. You wouldn't take any chances. You'd put it every place. You'd put it by the telephone, and you hide a few bottles under the dresser.

Then you would go and you buy a variety of clocks, all of which scream out at 9 o'clock in the morning in a variety of ways, so that you are sure you are getting up, and you're going to take your medicine. That's what you would do.

Now, that is believing. So, don't be so quick to say, "No, I don't take this human viewpoint indifference toward prayer. I think prayer is really important. The test is in the taking of the medicine. That tells how important you think it is.

**Academic Studies**

Some of you never applied the Bible to your academic studies. You never bring the Bible up against science. You don't bring it up against literature. You don't bring it up against history. Consequently, Bible study is a rather dull subject to you simply because you don't recognize that the Bible is the key for all your academic studies, and that if you are really going to be a person that can find happiness, and that God can bless, then you're going to have to apply the Bible to all these academic fields. And if you realize that, and if you really understood that, then the Bible and your study of the Word of God would become very important. You would be very devoted to the study of doctrine because you would understand that only this can give you a balance, and an understanding, and a perspective upon all these academic fields.

The unbeliever says, "There are no absolutes, so anything is tolerated under the guise of freedom. Therefore, he has to have a different basis of guidance. What do you say? "Oh, yes, I believe there are absolutes. Yes, there are rights, and there are wrongs. The Bible says you should do this, and the Bible says you shouldn't do that." But do you really believe that, or have you gone over to feelings as your guidelines?

**Feelings**

How much do you do as a result of feelings instead of your mind, filled with God's viewpoint, directing your feelings in a proper way, rather than your feelings just running amuck because your mentality has released its authority, and because your mentality has no content in it so that it can guide your feelings?

**Music**

What do you do with music? Some of you believe that music can really raise the emotions in many directions. You believe that music is a creative thing that God has produced. Well, what kind of music do you listen to if God has produced it? What kind of lyrics are you willing to listen to? What kind of music rhythms and composition are you willing to listen to? How much trash are you willing to pour into your ear? Well, that's a human viewpoint. You have not applied the principle that the Word of God has taught us in the book of Philippians, that what you think about is what you become. What you listen to is what you become. When primitive societies gather together for an immoral sex orgy, they don't play Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. They get out there, and they put together the hardest rock beat that can cause the emotions to jump until there is complete lack of control. And the more wild and the more frenzied it is, the better. For what? To fulfill the purpose of immorality.

So, it is possible, if you know anything about music at all, to raise all kinds of attitudes, not only with the music, but even perhaps more significantly, with the lyrics (with the content). Again, it is absolutely amazing what we can hear on public radio and on public television in the way of lyrics that obviously have not been brought into captivity to the mind of Christ as the Bible says we should.

**Art**

The same goes for art. There is again what is supposedly an artistic expression which is but the expression of the obscenity of the old sin nature. And again, the mind of Christ has not been superimposed through an understanding of the Word of God upon the things that we tolerate and accept as art.

**Ecumenical Fellowship**

So, if you take the attitude that the Bible is not the final authority on spiritual matters, then you will find it all right to have ecumenical fellowship. I heard of a church last summer in Chicago that ran some tent meetings. When I first saw the announcement, I said, "That's good." I thought about doing that in years past myself. I grew up as a kid within the context of churches that would put up a huge tent on the parking lot, and they would have sometimes as many as six weeks at a time of tent meetings. An evangelist would be brought in who understood the gospel and who could preach it, and there was great music. And it was an outreach in the community in a very significant way. Well, that was my image. That was my frame of reference.

Then I looked at the speakers. On Monday night, the speaker was from the Presbyterian Church. On Tuesday night, it was a Roman Catholic priest. On Thursday night, it was a Lutheran pastor. On Friday night, it was a Jewish rabbi. On Saturday night, it was a Baptist. On Sunday night, it was the whole mongrel dog. Now what kind of a thing is this? How can those, who are in diametrically opposite conviction to one another, gather together to hold a campaign of spiritual enlightenment? That's human viewpoint imposed in our thinking as believers in our very process of serving the Lord.

What I'm trying to do is to alert you that we suffer in our day from the intimidation of the thinking of people all around us. We have often lost our way as to what is really pleasing to God, and what is pleasing to society. The apostle Paul had to look at that very issue. He said, "I know what is pleasing to the immoral man; I know what is pleasing to the moral man; and, I know it is pleasing to the religious man. But I have a message to give you that has solid content based upon the authority of the Word of God, and the message will not please you. But it is my job to communicate it to you in spite of the fact that it will not please you, and I will not fall into the trap of trying to communicate this in a false way by getting you into a football team rally of some cheerleading slogans that I'm going to throw at you; or, that I'm going to find an ecumenical approach so that direct contradictions are presented as if they were not contradictions.

Now you can carry this out on your own. But just remember that the presentation of God's truth is not going to be welcomed by the unbeliever. But that's not the issue. The issue is to be sure that he understands it. That's the only thing we are concerned with –, that they understand their condition. When Paul got through here with this first part of the book of Romans, no honest thinking person could have failed to grasp the fact that he was in trouble with God. Obviously, we saw some of these questions that the Jew threw at him in contempt, and even the false accusation that Paul was teaching them to just live like the devil. They said, "I'm under grace. I can always confess my sin. I can always come clean. Oh, man, I can just roll around in the mud." And Paul said, "No, I've never taught that. But some people say that I've taught that. Some people are perverting what I've taught about grace." But the apostle didn't try to come up with some gimmickry in order to get people on the ball for the Lord.

I'll tell you about one of the most disgusting things that I've ever sat in, and I've sat in it several times. I don't know how I get trapped into these things. Usually, it's in somebody's conference campground that I'm. It is the old service we used to be called "a fagot service" (a stick service). They've had to change the name. I don't know what they call it now. The last time was up in New York state. We sat in bleachers, and this very famous man (a nationally known evangelist) gave a very moving challenge about devotion to the Lord, and about committing your life to Jesus Christ, and about really burning yourself out for the Lord, and about really living. And I'm waiting for the real content to come along. This is all the cheerleading stuff, and I'm saying, "Hot dog! Amen! You bet! Let's go!" And I'm waiting for the real stuff to come. This is a warm-up.

Then he says, "Now here are a group of sticks. I want each of you to come up and pick up one of these sticks and throw it on the fire." And the fire was a little thing, and, of course, it was going to grow. He says, "As each of you make your commitment, I want you to come down and throw this stick on the fire. ... Of course, pretty soon, these dumb sheep from all over the bleachers that were set up there, one-by-one, would come down, and they'd throw a stick on the fire, make a little word of commitment to the Lord, until they a whole pile of sticks burning.

What is that? That is human viewpoint, Madison Avenue, public relations promotion. But did any of those people have anything substantial with which to go out now and implement that desire to serve the Lord? All they had was a fire that burned down when that fire burned down. And when that fire burned down and was nothing but ashes, that's all they had left too in their souls – just ashes. Don't fall into that trap of that kind of gimmickry, enthusiasm, and promotion. And we've got a lot of it.

Let's get a day of prayer. That's a good one – a day of prayer and fasting: "All right, everybody is going to pray and fast today." So, every ecumenical Roman Catholic; Jew; liberal; Protestant; fundamentalists; and, the whole shebang gets together, and they pretend that they've got some approach to God. Let's get a bunch of foul-mouthed, cursing, vile, high school students together in a public high school stadium for a football game, and let's stand and have prayer before we begin. So, somebody leads in prayer, and here are all these unbelievers doing their religious thing and bowing their heads. They just got through telling a filthy story to the person next to him, and now they're bowing in prayer. Doesn't that make your stomach creak? That's the kind of thing our society promotes today.

The apostle Paul says, "Do not fall into accommodation to that." If you do not agree because the Bible contradicts what some group stands for, then you are not in fellowship with that group, and don't pretend that you are. Just make it clear that they have deviated at a critical point, and that we do not share some common ground. Otherwise, you will never be able to give content in your witness that you've been called to do give.

So, it doesn't matter whether a person even has the Bible or not. He is just as guilty and he is just as lost before God simply because, as Paul has shown, God has put within us a sense of conscience. It condemns us. We are not what we should be. Now let's get to the real issue.

Now before Paul begins the formal declaration in verse 21, he begins in verse 9 with a summary of everything he has said. So, he says, "What then? Are we better than they?" "What then" is the two words to introduce the consequences. We would sort of say, "Therefore." This is really a Greek idiom in the Greek language. It's asking: What is the situation now about people in view of all that he has said thus far?" Paul is saying, "So, what's the condition of people after I've said all this?"

Then he says, "Are we better than they?" The world "better" is the Greek word "proecho." The word means "to surpass; to excel; or, to be in advance of another." Paul is using the word "we" in reference to himself and other Jews. In the context, he has just been talking about the Jews, and answering some of their objections. Now he says, "I have previously shown that the immoral gentile is doomed; that the moral gentile is doomed; and, you, as a religious person (as a religious Jew) are doomed." Then the Jew says, "Well, what advantage then was there to me to be have been born a Jew, and supposedly being under the special blessing of God? Paul has dealt with that problem. He said, "The biggest advantage was that you had the Bible, so you had information."

So, the question is summarized then in verse 9 after this line of discussion: "What then? Are we Jews better than they the gentiles?" Paul is asking whether unbelieving religious Jews are any better off than unbelieving gentiles. This is present tense – constantly. It is middle – to the Jews' benefit. It is indicative – a statement of fact. Some commentators take this in passive voice. This makes a little different interpretation. I'll just mention it to you. That would be to say, "Are we Jews at a disadvantage to the gentiles." If it's middle, which is what it seems more likely to be, then it says, "Are the Jews any better off than the gentiles." If it's passive, then it says, "Are the Jews at a disadvantage to the gentiles?" It doesn't matter whichever way Paul meant this. I think it was the first way. The answer which comes is the same.

Paul's answer is "No, in no way." The word "no" is the Greek word "ou," which you will remember is the strongest negative in the Greek language. And the word "in no way" is the Greek word "pantos." "Pantos means "all together" or "by all means." So, the two words together are saying, "Absolutely, in no way." It's a sweeping denial that the Jew is better off than the gentile, or that the gentile is any better off than the Jew. Why?

He says, "For." This is the introduction word "gar," introducing an explanation. He says, "For we have before proved both Jews and Greeks (or gentiles), that they are all under sin." The Greek word for "have before proved" is "proaitiaomai.” "Proaitiaomai" means "to charge beforehand," and it's a word that they use in a court of law. It was to declare the indictment. And it means here that, from Romans 1:18, Paul has declared the guilt of both Jews and gentiles before God. This is in the aorist tense. It's looking at the argument as a whole. It's in the middle voice. It's a benefit to Paul's argument. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

He has proved that both Jews and gentiles "are under." And the Greek word for "under" is "hupo: "Are under sin." Now, it is not saying here that all have sinned. He's going to say that in a little bit. I want you to notice this little Greek word "hupo" because it's a critical word. It means "under." And it is telling the position in God's eyes of every human being. It indicates a position in Adam under the control of the old sin nature. So, when he uses this word, he is saying that every human being has a problem for the simple fact that he is under the old sin nature.

**Under Sin**

So, there you are. Whoever you are – whether you are moral; immoral; or, religious, if you are an unbeliever, you're in God's sight under the control of the old sin nature. He has proved them both. He has shown that both Jews and gentiles are both alike under. And under what? Under sin. The world "sin" here is "hamartia." "Hamartia" means that they lack God's absolute righteousness. This is another way of saying that are under the old sin nature. This is singular. When we speak in the book of Romans about sin singular, it generally refers to the old sin nature. So, what he is saying is that everybody is under the control of the old sin nature. This word "hamartia" is one of several words in the Bible for "sin." It means "missing a standard" or "missing a mark." It is like standing on an archery range, pulling back the bow, letting loose with the arrow, and the arrow either misses the target or falls short of it. And you would describe that by the word "hamartia." The thing that we have fallen short of is God's absolute righteousness. That's the standard. And the reason for it is because we are under the old sin nature.

**The Old Sin Nature (The Flesh)**

So, what Paul says is that both Jews and Greeks equally lack the position of absolute righteousness. Why is this? Well, the old sin nature is the source of spiritual death. This is equally true of Jew and gentiles. Because you are born with an old sin nature, you are born spiritually dead (Romans 5:12, Ephesians 2:1). We secure the sin nature through physical birth. It comes through our father. The human father passes on the sin nature to the children. Psalm 51:5 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14 describe the fact that Adam was responsible for the sin – not Eve. Eve was tricked. Adam was a deliberate sinner. And for that reason, the Scriptures indicate that he, the father, is the channel of the old sin nature.

The believer continues to have an old sin nature after his born-again. 1 John 1:8 tells us that. The Bible says that you're a liar if you pretend that you do not have a sin nature even though you're born again. And if anybody lives with you long enough, they'll know you're a liar. The sin nature is very clearly there. The Christian who is under the control of the old sin nature is said to be in the status of carnality. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 and Romans 7:14 teach that. When you sin, you are under control of the old sin nature. You are a carnal Christian. The old sin nature in a Christian frustrates divine good production (Romans 7:15-17). It is the old sin nature that keeps you from doing that which pleases God.

Several different words which are used in the Bible to describe this old sin nature, or this all this "under sin" condition, that everybody who is born into the human race suffers from. Sometimes this is called "the flesh," as in Galatians 5:16. Sometimes the old sin nature is called "the old man" (Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:9). Sometimes it's called being carnal (Romans 7:14, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Sometimes it is called, as here, "hamartia" – sin in the singular. It is not in the plural. It is not "sins." You have this in Romans 3:9; Romans 5:12; Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 15:56; and, 1 John 1:8. All of these refer to the old sin nature under the word "sin." And sometimes the word "heart" (which generally in the Bible means "mind") is used to refer to the old sin nature, as in Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19; and, Mark 7:21-23.

**Sins and Human Good are both Evil**

The old sin nature produces the evil acts of sins. We have this in Mark 7:21-33. But the old sin nature also produces human good, which is also evil. We have this in Isaiah 64:6: "Our righteousness is as filthy rags." Also, Titus 3:5 says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have performed." So, the sin nature spews out evil from two directions: sins; and, human good. The old sin nature also expresses itself, on the one hand, in asceticism, which puts on a good religious front. It also expresses itself in lasciviousness, which is just open evil.

Now what's the solution for the old sin nature problem – this problem of being under sin? Well, the solution has a past; a present; and, a future factor to it. In the past part of it, Christ bore the guild of sin for the whole world (1 Peter 2:24, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Because He bore our sins, we have eternal fellowship with Him. When we receive Him as Savior, we establish eternal fellowship. That's the past provision of solution for sins. That's the first thing we have to explain to 20th century unbelieving man.

**Carnality**

The solution that God has given has a present application to us, and that is the carnality problem. Carnality is neutralized by the confession of known sins. We have that in 1 John 1:9. That establishes our temporal fellowship. That confession is part of God's solution for the old sin nature. First he breaks the control in the past of the old sin nature by trusting in Christ as Savior. Then in the presence he breaks the old sin nature's control by the confession of sin.

Then there's a future aspect which we're all looking forward to, and that is the removal of the old sin nature forever from the resurrection body of the believer. We have this in Philippians 3:21; Romans 8:29; and, 1 John 3:2. There is coming a time when you will never be able to sin. You not only will not sin, but you will not be able to sin. You will be transformed into the character of Jesus Christ, and you will be as impeccable as He is.

**Spiritual Death**

There is one more point about the old sin nature. It is the soul that has to be saved? It is because of the presence of the sin nature in your soul that you have experienced spiritual death, which is described in Ephesians 2:1. And spiritual death separates all of humanity from God so that all need to be born again.

So, the condition of all mankind is under sin. I want you to notice that this is the first gracious expression in the dealing of God with us. When God says, "I have placed you under sin," you should look up to Him and say, "Thank you, Dear Lord. I'm so grateful for that." Because you have been placed under sin, you have now been placed in the position where you have been freed of any expectation on your part to come up with an answer. And that's why Paul stresses this right off the bat. Because you are under sin, you cannot in any way be expected to do anything about the fact that you are separated from God and headed for the lake of fire. If you were not declared by God as the judge under sin, you might have some hope of being able to wiggle out in some direction. So, you should view this as a judicial declaration of God. God, as judge of the university, in His sovereignty, has said, "I declare you to be in the position under sin."

Once you're under sin (you're under the old sin nature), you are condemned by God, and therefore you can do nothing to save yourself. That is the important thing. Beware of any religious system that suggests that you can do something to save yourself: you can repent; you can confess; you can walk an aisle, and kneel at the altar, and pray through to victory; you can take water baptism; or, you can take the Lord's Supper. All of these additions are a contradiction of what Paul says here – that God has declared everybody under sin. If you're under sin, then you can't do anything. That means that you're dead, and a dead person is a dead person. A dead person cannot do anything. He can't do a thing to make himself alive.

Now, if you don't think that's true, I suggest that you make your way to the closest funeral establishment, and ask to speak to some dead person that they have on the premises. And they'll be happy to oblige you (while they call the police), just to keep you quiet. But you can walk in there, and you can talk to this dead person, and you can talk to them all day long. And what's he going to do? He's going to stay there dead.

Now, that's what it means when God has said the tremendous thing to us: "You are under sin." That means: "That's it, friend. It's all over. Stick your hands in your pockets, and stand around and say, 'OK, God, now what? Where do I go? What's the solution? What's the answer?'" And that's exactly what Paul is trying to get these people of these various categories to say to Him. And that's what they do say. They finally have their backs to a wall. They are immoral people; moral people; or, religious people. Finally they all say, "Well, then what in God's name is the answer? You've convinced me. You've branded me. The Word of God has declared me to be under sin. What can I do about it?" And the apostle Paul says, "I'm glad you asked that."

Then he launches into the tremendous dissertation we're going to be studying over the sessions ahead of the formal presentation of justification by faith – God's solution for man's helpless position. But first, He had to put him in that helplessness. That's what we have to do in dealing with 20th century man today.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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