***Witnessing  
RO21-02***

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We are continuing in Romans 3:10-18, in which Paul has been presenting various proofs from Scripture concerning the fact that all humanity is under the wrath of God, and thus judged doomed to spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Whatever else a born-again believer is in life, he is first and foremost a witness for Jesus Christ to this segment of humanity which is under the wrath of God – the segment of unbelievers. The last thing that Jesus had to say to His disciples and to us before He left the Mount of Olives and returned to heaven is recorded for us in Acts 1:8-9, where He said, "'But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, in Judea, and in Samaria, and into the uttermost part of the earth.' When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

It is very evident from this final declaration that, first and foremost, we are witnesses of the Lord Jesus. He is now seated in heaven, sharing the Father's throne. He is seated at the Father's right hand. At the same time, we Christians are the Lord's ambassadors. We are the ambassadors that He has left behind – that He has sent to this last mass of humanity which is under the judgment and the condemnation of God.

So, 2 Corinthians 5:20 tells us: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." We actually are in our daily lives the ambassadors who are beseeching people in behalf of Jesus Christ to turn from their human viewpoint darkness to His divine viewpoint enlightenment.

**Witnessing**

The question is: how do you approach 20th century unbelievers in the United States? This is the critical issue in witnessing. Unbelievers have their own human viewpoint opinions about sin; salvation; God; and, divine judgment. Paul's final proof here of the condemnation to hell in the book of Romans is from a series of Old Testament Scriptures which are simply the capstone on many evidences that he has used already to reach the unbeliever with the fact that he is under the wrath of God.

We're going to review what we have come through thus far in our study of Romans, because the way Paul approaches (in the opening part of Romans) his witnessing ministry is the way all missionary work must be done today, if it is legitimate, and is the way that all the witnessing work must be done today if it is going to be legitimate, and if God Holy Spirit is going to use it. And particularly, in 20th century America, you must know how to approach the unsaved man. The way you approach the unsaved man is not by going up to him and telling him that God loves him and has a wonderful plan for his life. That is not the scriptural way to witness to people, and we'll show you in a minute why.

**Convictions against Humanity**

When Paul has come to this section, he brings 14 counts of conviction against everyone, which God has declared is against all of humanity. We have this and Romans 3:10-18. We have thus far seen these counts of conviction against humanity:

1. **No one possesses the absolute righteousness necessary to enter heaven.**
2. **No one functions on divine viewpoint thinking.**
3. **No one seeks after God.**
4. **All have abandoned God's ways.**
5. **All are useless because they are outside of the plan of God.**
6. **No one produces divine good (only human good).**
7. **All have foul speech like an open grave.**
8. **All are liars.**
9. **All use speech to injure others.**
10. **All wish evil upon others, and have a bitter mental attitude.**
11. **All readily commit mental and overt murder.**

We now come to indictment number 12:

1. **Destruction and Misery are in their Ways**

We have this in Romans 3:16 which says, "Destruction and misery are in their ways." This comes from Isaiah 59:7. The word "destruction" is the Greek word "suntrimma." "Suntrimma" means "to break into pieces; to shatter; or, to fracture." It connotes ruining something. The old sin nature of the unbeliever destroys anything that stands in the way of its desires and of its lust patterns.

So, one of the characteristics of human beings, because of their old sin nature, is to destroy anything that stands in the way of indulging your lust patterns. Consequently, it says, "Destruction" plus "misery." The Greek word for "misery" is "talaiporia," which means hardship; suffering; and, distress. So, the natural quality of the unbeliever is that he ruins things, and he leaves a trail of misery behind him in his associations; in his speech; and, in his contacts. There is no verb here. It just says, "Destruction misery in their ways." That's the Greek way of making a thing very emphatic.

The word "ways" is "hodos." Here it means their course of conduct. In their course of conduct, the unbeliever has a way of ruining things, and leaving a trail of misery behind him, causing grief. So, the average unbeliever goes through life, and he ruins the lives of other people. He brings misery into the lives of other people. He ruins his own life, and he brings misery into his own life. He ruins human relationships. He brings misery into these contacts of life.

So, the summary point here is that: "Destruction and misery are their way of life." All of humanity is under this black cloud – that everyone tears down and brings grief into the course of their lives, and into the lives of other people.

1. **They have not Known the Way of Peace**

We have the next indictment in Romans 3:17: "And they have not known the way of peace." This comes from Isaiah 59:8. The word "and," of course, adds just another point here of this line of indictments. The word for "way" is again "hodos," that we had just a moment ago. Here again it stands for conduct. The way that they have not known is the way of peace. The word "peace" is this Greek word "eirene," and it means "personal harmony." It means personal happiness, and it uses that strong Greek negative ("ou"), which means absolutely they do not have. If there is something that characterizes unbelievers, it's unhappiness. They are not characterized by happiness. They just simply do not know it. That's the word that is used. The word for "known" is "ginosko." You may remember that that is the word for knowledge by experience. This is not something you learned about by studying a book. This is something in your experience.

**Unhappiness**

So, the unbeliever in his experience does not know happiness; that is, peace is a foreign element in his life. He is constantly torn up about something. He is constantly in turmoil. The Old Testament says, "He's like the sea, which, as the waves come rolling in, they just scoop up everything that is on the bottom of the ocean floor, and all the debris and all the trash, and throw it up on the beach. This is the life of the unbeliever. He is constantly in turmoil. Peace is a foreign experience to him.

So, our summary point number 13 is that they do not possess or practice a life of peace. All of humanity is under this cloud – that no one knows in daily experience the way of personal happiness.

Item number 13 concludes the series on indictment as to the conduct of humanity. Remember that first we had in Romans 3:10-12 the character of humanity. Then in Romans 3:13-17, we had the conduct of humanity.

1. **There is no Fear of God**

Now he gives in Romans 3:18 a summary statement. He takes it from Psalm 36:1. It is indictment number 14, and it is kind of a summary conclusion tying all this up as to why God's wrath is against humanity.

It says, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." The word "fear" is "phobos." This means "a reverential attitude toward God." It connotes a sensible dread of displeasing God just because you respect God. It is not mere fear of divine punishment. It is just the fact that, because of who God is, we have a reverential attitude toward him, so that we do not seek to insult Him or displease Him.

The whole problem with the unbeliever lies right here. He does not fear God. He does not have any respect for God at all. The problem is not so much what man does as what he thinks – his attitude. That is the problem that he has with God. It says, "He does not have this before," which is the Greek word "apenanti," which means simply "in the sight of" or "before" – or "in the sight of the eyes" (the "ophthalmos"). Here this means in his mental attitude – the mental attitude of the unbeliever is that of having no respect for God.

So, here he stands, summing it all up. Principle number 14 against him is: "They do not fear God." All are under the cloud that they all characterized by an attitude of arrogant pride and of evil.

So, these 14 points against humanity make a very striking blow. They summarize what Paul has previously said. Now he says, "And here's what the Bible says. I've shown you some other ways that you are under the wrath of God. The Bible says, "Here is the problem: There is none righteous. They lack absolute righteousness. There is none that understands. They like divine thinking. There is none that seeks after God. They are self-centered. They all abandon the way of God. They're negative to Bible doctrines. They are together become unprofitable. They do not fulfill God's plan. There is no practice's goodness – divine good. There is an open sepulcher. They have the stench of evil in their speech. With their tongues, they have been using deceit. They are liars. The venom of asps is under their lips – their gossip and their slander. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness – foul language and mental hatred. Their feet are swift to shed blood – murder. Destruction and misery are in their ways. They tear down and they bring grief. They have not known the way of peace. There is no inner happiness – only violence. There is no fear of God before their eyes. They are arrogant in their pride in their evil.

That is an overwhelming condemnation against all mankind. Once a person is ready to face up to this kind of indictment against him, he is then ready to say, "Well, what am I going to do?" He is ready to ask, like the Philippians jailer, "What shall I do to be saved?" When he gets these 14 points through his head, and he accepts them as truth, he realizes that there is no hope for him unless God comes up with an answer.

**Witnessing**

So, at this point, we should stop and review, from the beginning of this book, what guidelines we have for witnessing – the witnessing technique of the apostle Paul, because you and I should learn now how to go about being ready to give an account of the faith that is within us. You will remember that Paul, in the beginning of the book of Romans, dealt with two kinds of people. First, he said, "Those who do not have the Bible." Then he said, "To you who do have the Bible." All of them are unsaved. Some unsaved people do not have access to the Bible. The world is full of them. Some unsaved people do have access to the Bible, and they have information from the Bible. There are many of those. Each of those has to be approached in a different way.

So, first of all, let's look at what we have seen of Paul's technique with those who are without the Bible; that is, you might even live in our society of 20th century America and be without the Bible. Most of the people you meet will be in this category. They are simply ignorant of the Bible. They are not knowledgeable at all in spiritual things. They have many caricatures and distortions concerning what the Bible says. This is the kind of person we most often meet in our witnessing. He has no biblical frame of reference.

So, what does Paul do? Well, he begins by calling attention to what is revealed of God within and outside of man, apart from written Scripture, because that is the thing we have to start with. People do not stand in a neutral vacuum relative to the knowledge of truth about God. Sooner or later, you have heard the question come up: what about the savage (the primitive person) in some way-off jungle area who never hears about Jesus Christ; who never hears the gospel; and, who never sees a missionary? What is God going to do with that person? Is he going to send that person to hell?

**God's Absolute Truth**

That very question will tell you something about the person that asks that question. Right away, if anybody ever asks you that question, you will know that that person has not been very well taught in the Word of God, because that question reflects the impression that there is a vacuum relative to truth, and that people live their lives in a neutral vacuum of truth; that is, that they never have access to the truth of God just because they never have the Bible, or because a missionary does not come to give them a verbal message. This is the first thing that the book of Romans took up, and that is to establish that everybody has God's absolute truth.

**From Creation**

First of all, they have it from creation. Paul was very careful to say, "Look around you. You can see that everything in this creation, including ourselves, indicates that there's someone out there who is responsible for this. If we are personalities, He must be a personality. A stone will not create a personality. Only a person can make a person. And we can think. We can have feelings. We can make choices. We have will. We are persons. We know that about Him. It would take a great power to create all this. Where did all this come from? Someone out there has such tremendous power. Only God could have such power to produce this universe. He's out there. I don't know anything more about Him, but I know that he is there."

Then Paul says, "Now look down inside of yourself. You have been made in the image of God. And because you have been made in the image of God, which means that you have a personality: you can think; you can feel; and, you can make choices. And you have, because of that image, a conscience. And that conscience within you screams out for righteousness. It screams out for what is right, and it drives you to seek what is right. So, I don't care if you are the most primitive, backwoods savage in the darkest place on the face of this earth, you have some systems of rights and wrongs. Within your group of associations, there are some things about which you say, 'This is right,' and you have some things about which you say, 'This is wrong.' Wherever you get them from, there rights and wrongs. Why did you do that? Because you were driven from something within you, which is the image of God screaming at you that there is a right, and you have a sense of obligation to pursue that right." Now that's truth. That's God's absolute truth: from outside of ourselves; and, from inside of ourselves, apart from these 14 indictments that we read about against all humanity in Scripture.

So, Paul begins by calling attention to this. I want you to notice that he does not approach the unbeliever with the Bible. He begins actually at Romans 1:18. That is past the introduction, and that is where he takes up the first type of person without the Bible. You remember that there are two types of people without the Bible. One is the immoral person, and the other is the moral person. There are two types of individuals both function without the Bible. He begins in Romans 1:18 with the immoral person who has no access to the Bible, and he declares to him that he's under the wrath of God: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and righteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And the very first thing Paul says is that the man who has never heard the Bible has the truth. He has absolute truth. But what does he do with it? He suppresses it.

He has this truth from creation. He has this truth of the image of God in him, and he suppresses it. He rejects it. He goes negative toward that truth. We call that God-consciousness or conscience. If he goes positive toward that truth, one thing inevitably will happen, and that is that God will see to it that someone brings him the revelation of the gospel. He cannot go to heaven just because he says, "Yes, I know there's a God out there." He cannot go to heaven just because he says, "Yes from within myself, my conscience tells me there is right and there is wrong, and I'm going to suffer and pay for my wrongs." That won't take him to heaven. He cannot go to heaven because the Bible says, "There is no name given under heaven whereby we must be saved except the name Christ Jesus." Therefore, he has to know what Christ has done in his behalf on the cross to pay for his sins, and that he must accept that provision by faith.

However, before 20th century man is going to accept that, he has to be convinced that the Bible is true. That's our problem. We live in a post-Christian era where the Bible is no longer viewed as being any authority whatsoever. Therefore, it is pointless for you to go up and quote John 3:16 to a person, and tell him that God loves him, and that God has plans for his life, because the unbeliever is not sure that's true. And he's not really convinced that that is a true statement. He has no interest in that. If you quote the Bible to him, that's meaningless. He rejects that. He has no conviction whatsoever from that. He is not ready to accept the Bible statement on anything because it is not an authority in our culture today.

However, the fact that every human being has been made in God's image sets every one of us in a context in which we must live out our lives. God's truth has been stamped upon us and we cannot escape it. We will live out our lives with that stamp of truth upon us. So, what we do with an unbeliever (be he the moral or the moral type), we just do not deal with him on the Bible first. We deal with him first on the basis of the stamp of God which is already upon him from creation and from the image of God within him.

A person has to acknowledge the image of God which in fact is in him. He's conscious of it. He cannot deny it. That consciousness is what is giving him the sense of what he ought to be. Every human being has a sense of what should be. Every human being has a sense of what ought to be. That's what you point out to an unbeliever. You have some ideas of what you ought to be, don't you? You have some sense of what should be, don't you? That is the image of God within you which is speaking to you. That is the conscience within you. That is your consciousness of God that is telling you what ought to be. He can't deny that. He can say "No" to you. He can lie to you. But nobody can deny the fact that within us there is this sense of what should be. There is the sense of what is right, and that some things are wrong. We may not always know what's right and what's wrong, but the very fact that that quality exists, and that difference is there – we are aware of that.

So, you push an unbeliever, first of all, to the acceptance of that point – to admitting that I do have a consciousness that I'm not right. There is a thing that is right, and there is a thing that is wrong.

Then Paul does the next step. He says, "OK, you're aware of the fact that certain things should be. How do you match up to them? And he pushes the unbeliever to the next step, and this is very painful for an unsaved person, especially for the moral man. The moral man is very definite in the fact that there are some things that should be.

Then you push him to the fact that he does not live up to those things that he should be. You will notice that's exactly what the apostle Paul did. He took the immoral man, and he pushed him to the fact that he has this truth, and he's suppressing it. He took the moral man, and he says, "You clearly admit the image of God in you. That's why you insist that you must be right in certain ways. You must do certain things because they're right. But you do these things that are wrong, even when you say you should not do these things. As Paul says, "You say that you shall not commit adultery. Do you commit adultery? You who say you will not murder, do you commit murder? You say this is wrong and this is wrong. Do you do it?" And his response is: "Yes, I do it. I do it overtly, or I do it mentally. I'm guilty of the very things about which I say, "No, I shouldn't do them."

So, Paul takes this image of God, which tells us what we ought to be, and he matches it up against what we are. Then it is very clear to the man without the Bible that he is short of the glory of God. Whatever else he knows about that God, he knows that he is not prepared to meet the standards of that God who is out there. He is in rebellion against God in his lifestyle. His thinking and his actions are in rebellion against God.

So, in this way, Paul creates a tension in the unbeliever's soul between what he knows he ought to be and what he knows he is. And in none of this does Paul quote the evidence of the Bible, which, of course, is true, and which is conclusive, and is the final statement of our problem against us (between us and God). But he doesn't go to that. He only deals with what the unbeliever is willing to admit about himself. He does not bring himself to a discussion with the unbeliever to prove that the Bible is true. Farther down the line, that should be done. But initially, let's just look at you the way you are. Let's forget about the Bible. Let's forget about religious viewpoints and all that. Let's just take a look at what something inside you tell us about yourself, and what this creation tells you about God, and how you match up to it.

The tension that is then created within a human being is something really terrific. That tension, when it is not resolved, can drive people even to suicide. That is the unsaved man reaching the epitome of tension unresolved in the soul between what ought to be and what is. In a way, you must be careful when you do push the unbeliever in this respect, because you must understand that you are pushing him to the brink. If you force him to admit all this about himself, he has nowhere else to go. He has defended himself; he has comforted himself; and, he has brought some stability into his life through his human viewpoint thinking by rationalizing this into some consistent pattern of living. But when you show him the inconsistency of himself, then you have torn him from any moorings he has whatsoever. And now he is really adrift, and it could destroy him.

The book of Ecclesiastes, if you'll turn to it for a moment, is an excellent example of a man who has this problem of this inner tension between what is and what ought to be. In Ecclesiastes 1:2, we read, "'Vanity of vanities,' says the preacher. 'Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.'" Here's an observation on the part of Solomon, the smartest man that ever lived, but who was way out of fellowship. And notice that this as a believer who is expressing the same kind of thinking as unbelievers – the same kind of human viewpoint here. Here is Solomon, way out of fellowship so that his whole mind is saturated with human viewpoint thinking. That's why we say that nine-tenths of Ecclesiastes is not the truth. It is the unbeliever speaking, in effect. It is human viewpoint throughout this book.

He starts right off, and he says, "Life is empty. Life is purposeless. Life is pointless." You are wrong, Solomon. It is not that way. Human viewpoint is that way. But when you're tied in to divine viewpoint, you discover that life has great meaning. Life has great purpose. You discover, indeed, that God not only loves you, but that He has a fantastic plan for your life. It is not vanities. It is not pointless.

The problem with Solomon here is that he knows it should not be so. That's where the tension comes. In his state, his life is pointless. But down within him, the image of God says, "That should not be so. That is not the way you were made. That is not what God made you for.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 is again observing that something is out of balance with his life: "That which is crooked cannot be made straight. That which is lacking cannot be numbered." He says, "There is something wrong with my life. I can't straighten it out. There's just something missing in my life. I can't get the numbers all together. I can't bring it to what it should be.

Look at Ecclesiastes 1:17-18. He says, "I'll try intellectual pursuits," and he discovers that that doesn't resolve his tensions: "And I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I studied psychology. I studied psychopathic, psychotic mentalities and qualities. I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief. And he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow."

So, the intellectual scientist who has made science his god has no answers. He has no peace. His wisdom, his knowledge, his understanding only creates more tension for him between what is and what ought to be.

Turned over to Ecclesiastes 9:7-10. You get the feeling that Solomon is getting very emotional here. He's almost really beginning to crack up, and he's finally reaching out desperately for some relief: "'Oh, God,' he says, 'I've got to get off this conflict within my soul. Somehow I've got to bring peace to myself. Somehow I've got to relieve the tension which is within me.'"

Now Solomon eventually did it. He knew how to do it. You get down to the end of the book, and finally he gets his head screwed on straight again, and he confesses his sins, and he comes back into fellowship. He's been out of temporal fellowship for years. And being out of temporal fellowship got him 700 wives and 300 concubines. That's something he lived a long time to regret. But that was just one of the evidences of the tensions. I mean that he was in such tension, that he felt that if he could just find the right girl: "I just know there's the right girl someplace," and that's a lot of girls. Certainly he should have found it there. No. It just didn't work.

In Ecclesiastes 9:7-10, things are really getting sticky for him. Notice verse 7: "Go your way. Eat your bread with joy. Drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works." He says, "Get as many kicks out of life as possible in the midst of your unresolved tensions. Just go ahead," he says, "and pretend that God says, 'You're OK with me, pal.' And just get all the kinks out of life that you can. Just forget it."

Look at Ecclesiastes 9:8: "Let your garments be always white, and let your head lack no ointment." When do people wear white garments? When do they put on perfume? When do they doll themselves up? When everything is going well. So, Solomon says, "Just pretend everything is great. Dress up. Go on out on the town. Just act like it's all just great.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 says, "Live joyfully with the wife that you love all the days of the life of your vanity which He has given you under the sun – all the days of your vanity. For that is your portion in this life and your labor which you take under the sun."

In Ecclesiastes 9:9, he says, "Enjoy what you can of marriage in a pure human viewpoint environment, because there is no living beyond the grave." So, he says, "Just get the best that you can out of marriage. That's all you're going to enjoy. There's nothing beyond." This is terrible.

Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in Sheol where you go." He sums it all up here with the advice to make as much as possible of what you find yourself doing with your life right now, because there's nothing beyond the grave. He says, "Whatever you do, get your kicks now, and pursue it to the end, because after you die, that's it, man. You're dead. There's no more." That is a human viewpoint. This is a man speaking who is in such intense inner turmoil and conflict between the image of God that's in him, and what he is because he is suppressing the truth about God. This fellow knew better. He knew a whole lot better. He knew a lot better than most of us know. Yet he suppressed the truth of God. Anytime you suppress the truth that God has given you, you are going to be in internal turmoil like you wouldn't believe it.

That's why we tell you that it is a dangerous thing for you to sit in a church service where the truth has been preached, because God will only tolerate negative volition so long, and then he will permit you to go spiritually insane. And you will then begin to believe false doctrine. You will begin to be in love with secondary things. You will begin to despise your true loves. You will set them aside, and you will give your devotion to secondary pseudo objects. That is the end of the line. That's the bottom of the pile – when secondary objects receive your true affections and true loyalties.

How do you get there? Because first of all, you made the mistake of going to church where the truth was taught on the authority of the Word and the language of the Word of God. Don't ever go to a church like that if you intend to buck your back up against what you hear, because you'll get away with it only for so long, and then the Lord will reach in; He'll snatch you out of that context; and, He'll set you off on madness.

Solomon spent a big chunk of his life in that kind of madness. It was all wasted time. It was all lost relative to rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

So, unbelievers are in this condition of rebellion against God's truth. Because they do not want to subject themselves to God's truth, they're very flippant about the matter. They're flippant about Christianity, because they are naive mentalities. So, they just pass off, in some flippant way, what is really a great ache that is sitting down deep within their souls. You have to know this about unbelievers. When they are flippant with you about God; about sin; about evil; and, about salvation, it is their way of trying to take the edge off of the ache that resides deep within their souls, between what they know they should be and what they are.

The truth from creation of God's existence, and from conscience, and from the standards of God that these give – this is the basis on which the lost are going to be judged at the great white throne. So, don't ever ask, "How about the person who has never heard?" He has heard. He is going to be judged at the great white throne on the basis of the standards of right and wrong that creation and the image of God within him brought forth. He did have the absolute truth. He didn't have all of it, but he had the first stage of it that he needed to accept. Had he gone positive to that, he would have received stage two, which is the gospel information, and would have then gone the rest of the way to eternal life.

So, the unbeliever has the truth, but he does not have faith. That's the problem. Remember, everybody must go from truth to faith. Faith doesn't affect the truth one way or another. Faith doesn't add anything to the truth. That's why you and I were told by the Lord that we are to be His witnesses. That is our job. That is because until people have the truth (the information), faith is worthless. Faith can only function on the basis of truth that you have. We, the believers, are the second stage of bringing the truth of the gospel beyond what creation and the image of God gives to the unbeliever. You cannot apply faith to what you are ignorant of.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul has been dealing with the immoral man who does not have the Bible, and he has pushed him to this inner tension. In Romans 2:1-16, he deals with the moral man who also does not have the Bible, but who acts upon, more definitely, certain principles of right and wrong. And this man is also pushed to the same tension. The moral unbeliever admits that what his conscience says ought to be, ought to be. But he only gives a mental assent to his conscience. But when it comes to his thinking and to his deeds, they violate what his conscience tells him. So, he does not quiet his conscience. While he gives assent to these things, the immoral man rejects them, and he's uncomfortable. The moral man accepts them but doesn't do them. He's equally uncomfortable. Conscience can only be satisfied by living in the truth of divine viewpoint, and no unbeliever can do this.

So, in Romans 2:12-16, Paul does finally bring in Scripture. From Romans 2:1-11, he speaks to the moral man apart from Scripture, just like he did to the immoral man. But then, finally, after he's established that apart from Scripture you're condemned, then he goes to the Bible and says, "You're aware of what your condition is. You're aware of the problem. You know how torn up you are on the inside. There is a solution. But there's only one place you can find that solution, and that's in the Bible." Now the unbeliever is ready to listen to Scripture. Now you have brought him to the point where he is on the brink, and he has no place else to go but just out into nothing – a leap into absurdity. Now he is ready to say, "What is the solution? What does the Bible have to say?" Now he's ready to give consideration to the Word of God.

So, in Romans 2:12, Paul then starts bringing in the fact that people are going to be judged on the basis of what God has revealed in Scripture. He deals first with the unbeliever on the basis of his own frame of reference with his own culture. And when he has shown them that his own system breaks down, then he shows him what the Bible has to say about that system. Once the problem of the moralist is established, then Paul brings to him the witness of biblical Christianity.

Then, in Romans 2:17 on through Romans 3:8, he takes up the third type of person that you will witness to. You will not often witness to a person like this, but this is a person who knows the Bible. This is an unbeliever who knows the Bible. This is the unbeliever who has the Word of God. And Paul takes up the religious person. That's who this is. He uses the Jew as the example of the religious unbeliever who has the information of Scripture.

He says, "Now let's see what you do with it. You actually do have the Bible. You actually have read these things in the Word of God. You have what creation tells you. You have what the image of what God tells you. You also have what the Bible tells you. You're very religious: you have your male children circumcised; you go to the temple regularly; you give 10% of your income; you perform all of the rituals; you bring the sacrifices; you observe the feasts; you avoid eating leaven; and, everything down the line is very carefully observed. And you think that God is pleased with you. You think that you are going to have eternal life. You think that you are going to enter the promised Messianic Kingdom someday in the millennium because you have done these things."

Paul says, "I'm here to tell you that you're never going to see the Kingdom. I'm here to tell you that you're never going to see the streets of gold – heaven. You're never going to see those pearly gates (and they are pearly gates). You're just not going to be there."

This shocks the man with the Bible. He says, "You're crazy. I read the Bible every day. I go to church. I give money. I'm a church member. I've been baptized. You're crazy. I even give to the community chest. What do you mean that I'm not going to heaven?" Again, Paul presses upon this man the fact that what he is bringing to God is his human good. He presses the Scripture upon him. As long as he'll accept the Bible, Paul says, "I'll talk to you from the Bible." God says, "You bring me your human good, and it's filthy rags in My sight. You bring me your law works, and God says, "For my grace you are saved – not by works. It's through faith. That doesn't even come of yourself. That's the gift of God, which God gives you." There is nothing for you except what God gives you. There is nothing for you except what the grace of God brings you.

So, you're not going to get to heaven because you read your Bible; because you go to church; because you're a church member; because you've been baptized; or, because you perform good works of charity. You're only going to be saved because you accept what the Bible says in John 3:16 – that God loved you enough to die for you, and send His Son to pay the price for your sin – to pay what you could never pay.

So, what Paul presses upon the man with the Bible is that he too needs a righteousness that comes from outside of himself. That's the whole point. And the Bible gives him the answer as to where that righteousness comes from.

So, Paul takes him to the Scriptures, and he declares to him that: "Christ, who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Paul takes his own claims of loyalty to the Bible, and he uses that to show him that he is operating on a human viewpoint base of salvation. Then he presses home salvation by grace, which the Bible alone declares is the solution.

Having done this, then Paul comes to the section we have just completed in Romans 3:9-18. In verse 9, he says, "All of humanity, therefore, is under the guilt of sin. We know this by creation. We know this by the image of God." Now Paul says, "I'm going to show to you from Scripture." And then in verses 10-12, he gives the evil character of everyone. Then in Romans 3:13-17, he gives the evil conduct of everyone, as per God's declaration. This comes from Scripture now. Then in Romans 3:18, he gives the cause of this evil conduct – because you don't have any respect for God.

The immorality is not the basic problem of the unbeliever. His basic problem is what he thinks. Immorality is just an evidence of that problem. The problem is his mental departure of his mind into human viewpoint. He has the truth, and he is suppressing it. This departure from truth: the truth of creation; the truth of conscience; and, his rebellion against God. And that is the root of man's problem.

So, this is the issue that is before us. No amount of self-effort or self-improvement is going to solve the conflict within your soul. Bad fruit is not going to be change until the root is gone. The ache is not going to be removed until the thing that's causing it has been removed. The unbeliever needs the gospel to solve this inward alienation from God. And the unbeliever's basic problem, therefore, is not what he does. It is what he is. That's what the apostle Paul has so brilliantly shown us.

So, when you deal with an unbeliever who does not have the Bible, whether he is an immoral man or a moral man, press upon him conscience creation. If he has the Bible, then press upon him the Scriptures, and show him from that that he does not match up to God's standards.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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