***The Final Verdict, No. 1
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Please open your Bibles to Romans 3:19-20. We are now moving to what is the end of the line of what has been a rather lengthy introduction by the apostle Paul to the book of Romans. Romans 3:19-20, that we are looking at now, are the conclusion of that preparatory introduction.

Paul's purpose in this extended discussion, from the very opening verse, has been to show that every person in the world is a sinner who is doomed to hell. Then, having established the hopelessness of mankind's condition, Paul will begin in Romans 3:21 the formal explanation of how to escape the consequences of that condemnation under the wrath of God; how a person can change his destiny from hell to heaven; and, how a person has the option to go from the lake of fire to the eternal joys of God's presence in heaven. God has seen the need; He understands it; and, He has made provision for it.

Paul has shown that every last person has the truth, and always has had the truth, to be saved. There is not a person living today anywhere in the world who does not have the truth necessary to go to heaven. There never has been, and there never will be. The problem has been that the truth that people have possessed from creation conscience alone has been suppressed, as well as that which has come from the written Scriptures.

So, the person without the Bible is suppressing the truth of creation – the truth about God that his own conscience (his own image of God within him) tells him about. The person with the Bible is suppressing the truth of the written Scriptures illustrated here by Paul with the religious Jew.

Paul concludes this indictment with a series of Old Testament Scriptures, which he has quoted, which gives God's definitive viewpoint as to the condition of the human race. It is bad, bad, bad, and hopeless. We've look at those in detail. These Scriptures have revealed that mankind is depraved in character and he is depraved in conduct. The reason for it is because he suppresses the truth that he has about God.

**Man is Totally Depraved**

The declaration of God is consequently, that everyone is a sinner; and, furthermore, that everyone is totally depraved. You should get both of those. What we have seen in the opening of Romans is not only that everybody is a sinner, but that everybody is totally depraved. You can't do one thing toward helping yourself out of the mess that you find yourself in by just natural birth. Humanism is man's attempt by reason to come up with solutions for this human sin problem and the craving after God, which is within the human breast. And that solution is always a failure. Why? Because man is totally depraved.

So, let's understand, from the opening of Romans, that we are all sinners, and we all complete sinners in all aspects of our souls, so that we cannot take one step toward God. As a matter of fact, by nature, we don't even care to make the first step toward God. He has to make the step toward us.

**Your Death**

So, what we're saying is this: You may suddenly die. You may suddenly find yourself in the condition that people call being dead; that is, the body is dead, but of course, you are not dead. When people say a person is dead, they mean that his body is dead. If you were to suddenly discover yourself in the condition of being dead, and faced with God, what would you say that would be your claim that you had the right to enter heaven? You're facing God, and what is your claim before Him that you have the right to enter heaven?

**Good Works**

Generally, people will give two answers. One: they will claim their good works. They'll say, "I did the best I knew how." They will claim their sincerity. They'll say, "I tried to live up to The Golden Rule. I treated other people like I'd like them to treat me." They'll say, "I did all kinds of very gracious, and kind, and thoughtful, and loving things. I helped the poor, and I did many things of that nature. All of this is mere human good. God sees our good works as evil because they come from the old sin nature. But there are many people in the world today who, if they thought they were going to walk out on the street; be struck by a car; they were going to die on the spot; and, be in God's presence, they are counting on the fact that they are going to claim their good works as their right to enter heaven.

**Good Character**

The other favorite answer that people normally will give to that question is their good character. They will stand before God and they'll say, "God, I was never guilty of gross sins. I was a very religious person." They will say, "I tried to obey the Ten Commandments. I was a very moral person. And, as a matter of fact, I was really considerably better than most people." That's the key: considerably better than most people. That fact alone comforts the majority of the human race, when they think (if they ever do think) about facing God, and about the issues of heaven and hell. They are counting heavily on the fact that they are better than most people. This, of course, is mere relative righteousness, and God requires absolute righteousness, and that's the whole point of this book. There's no hope for you.

So, they're giving these two answers. And when you talk to people about their souls, these are the things that are in the back of 20th century man's mind. His mind is confident that he can think his way to God, and his thinking has led him to say that his good works merit heaven for him; or, his good character merits heaven for him.

Now, in Romans 3:19-20, which we're going to look at now, the apostle Paul shows what is going to happen to these two defenses in God's presence, for they will not stand up. The result will be to find yourself doomed to the lake of fire for all eternity.

So, we begin with verse 19, Paul says, "Now we know that whatever things the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." First of all, let's go through the passage and actually see what the original New Testament Greek language has to say here. The word "now" is the translation of the Greek word "de." This word introduces the significance of the Old Testament Scriptures which have just been quoted in the verses previous. We looked at 14 points that Paul made of condemnation against all the human race through the quotation of these Scriptures.

Now, the question is: so what do these Scriptures tell us? And he begins with the word "now" to indicate that he's going to give us now a conclusion. This section, please remember, is still part of Paul's dealing with the religious person as represented by the Jew. He has finished dealing with the immoral person. He says, "You're doomed." He has finished dealing with the moral unbeliever, and he says, "You're doomed." Now he is dealing with the religious unbeliever, as exemplified by the Jew, and he's going to show (and he has shown) that that person is doomed.

So, we're still in the section here about the religious person as represented by the Jew. And the Jew here is viewed as representative of all humanity relative to what God has revealed in Scripture about mankind. What is true about the Jew, in his relationship to sin and to God, is true, of course, of all the gentiles as well.

The Jew himself might try to evade these Scriptures that Paul has read to us. He might try to say, "Well, of course, that applies to those pagan gentiles. That doesn't apply to those of us who are under the Jewish covenant, and under the select nation of Israel." So, the apostle Paul very quickly closes in on the Jews to make it clear that it is true: the gentiles are under this condemnation that these verses represent. But so is he, the religious Jews.

So, Paul says, "Now, as a result of these verses, we know." The word "know" is the particular Greek word "oida." "Oida" is the Greek word for knowledge, which a person receives by instruction. There's a different Greek word when the Bible is talking about something you learn from your experience. This is the result of what Scripture has said. So, Paul says, "Now, on the result of these Scriptures that we have just read from the Word of God, we know something." This is in the mind of the reader. It's a statement of fact.

He says that what we know is "that." This introduces what is known: "That whatever things." Here is a pronoun referring to numbers and quantities. These are specific references, as we shall see, to the things which were involved in Judaism as the way of life. Whatever different things a person religiously may perform is what he's getting at here; specifically, "whatever things the law says." The word "law" is the word "nomos." This word has a broader connotation than just the law that we think of when we think of law. We usually think of the Mosaic Law. Or when we think of the word law in Scriptures, it sometimes is used to refer to what the Hebrew calls the Torah, or we call it the Pentateuch: the first five books of Moses. These in the Hebrew Bible are called "the law." However, this time the word "nomos" is broader than just those first five books. As you remember, he is referring to the Scriptures that he has just quoted, and those Scriptures were quoted from the Psalms and from the prophets, which are the other two major portions (the other two major sections) of the Hebrew Bible.

So, obviously, he is using the word "law" as it is sometimes used in the Bible in its general term, and we may equate this with Old Testament Scripture. So, Paul is saying whatever the Old Testament Scriptures here have to say: "Whatever the Scripture says."

Here we have an interesting thing in the Greek because you'll notice in English that you have: "Now we know that whatever things the law says, it says." And you have the word "says" two times in close proximity. In English, they look like the same thing. But in the Greek, it is not. It is two different words.

The first "says" is the Greek word "lego." This is the word which is used when you're referring to something very specific. This is the word that refers to the very content of Scripture. We would call it "propositions of truth." And it is emphasizing that there is some prominent, specific information from God in written form, which is understandable. So, the Holy Spirit uses the word "lego." Anytime the word "lego" is used, you're talking about some specific points that you can understand.

However, the next "says" is "laleo." "Laleo" is again the word for "says," but this word does not look at specific details. Instead, it looks at the Scripture as a whole. It's looking at the Old Testament as a unit (as a block). And what it is pointing out there is that we have an instrument which is a direct communication from the living God. We have something that carries authority. These are the specific details of what this authority says. So, here with these two words, the apostle Paul is telling us two things: God has spoken. The way He has spoken is in the unit of the written Bible, and we have that, and it is God's authority. What He has spoken, specifically within it, is detailed in importance. There are details of importance. There are propositions of truth. So, we have an authority that gives us specific statements of fact about man; sin; heaven; hell; God; and, eternity. All of these things are so critical to the person who may go out and find himself facing God in the next five minutes.

Scripture is not dead. It is living speech, as Hebrews 4:12 tells us. So, this word "laleo" is stressing for us that we have a living communication. It is an authoritative revelation. So, Paul says that now, from these Scriptures, we know from the information that the Bible gives us, that whatever details the law (the Old Testament specifically) says in its particular compositions, it (as an authority) speaks to them who are (that is, the Jews) under the law." It speaks to them who are under the law. The word "under" is the Greek word "en." There is a different Greek word that usually is the word for "under." This word "en" really means "in." So, what are he is saying is "those who are in the law." And this is the Bible's way of conveying the fact that the Jewish people were within the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. They were responsible to do what the Bible says.

What was true them is also true of us. We are responsible for doing what the Bible says. So, the whole phrase here "to those who are in the law" refers to the Jews. A category of humanity with the Bible is what he is referring to. And what the Old Testament says about the character and conduct of the unsaved Jew is true of the unsaved gentiles. The Old Testament tells us about the absolute righteousness of God, and it tells us that the Jew falls short of it. So, does the gentile. The Jew is a test case which demonstrates that the whole human race is sinful, and the whole human race is totally depraved.

So, he says, "To them who are under the law." Why does the Scripture say these things? Why does the Scripture give us this information? It says, "That." And this word "that" is the Greek word "hina," which indicates purpose. Now he's going to give us the purpose as to why the Bible gives us this information – why the Bible tells us these things, and why we must pay attention to its authority: "In order that every mouth may be stopped." The mouth referring to the organ of speech – the means for expressing one's viewpoint and attitudes. You declare what you think through your words.

What he is speaking about here is a verbal defense, so that every mouth may come into a certain condition with God. And that condition is described by the Greek word "phrasso." "Phrasso" means "to fence in." The idea here is to close off all excuses of the unbeliever, and close the unbeliever’s mouth about what? About his excuses for why he does not have the absolute righteousness that the authority of the Bible says he must have in order to enter heaven. This is to fence him in. This is in the aorist tense, which is the point in time at which the unbeliever faces his own moral guilt. It is passive voice because this has to be done to the unbeliever by the Word of God. The unbeliever in himself will not shut his mouth. The unbeliever in himself will give excuse and defense. So, something has to be done to him. That's why it's passive. It isn't because he doesn't want to say anything. It's just because he's been stopped. It is the subjunctive the mood here, which means that it’s potential for all unbelievers. This also is an expression of the grace of God.

The people who are the people who keep their mouths closed. If you sit in church, and somebody talks to you all the time, you don't learn very much. You're constantly disturbed. And the person who does the talking isn't learning very much. It is impossible to communicate any information to a person who doesn't shut his mouth and listen. It is obvious that there are some people who are never going to get their thinking straightened out, or their lives straightened out, because you cannot even channel information to them, not only verbally (because they can't take time to listen), but you can't even do it through a printed page (because they can't take time to read).

**Silence**

So, this is the condition about which God says, "I have to bring a human being to where he faces himself, and he's just silent." He just stands there in deathly silence like an accused person in a court of law who finally has been backed into a corner, and his guilt has been made clear, and he has no excuse. He can say nothing more to evade the obvious.

This is the condition that's going to exist at the great white throne judgment. Everybody is going to be "phrasso" in. They're going to be fenced in. When this mass of millions and millions and millions of human beings stand up before the great white throne, which is the final judgment upon unbelieving humanity before they are sent into the lake of fire, it is going to be a strange sight to be able to look out there in space and literally see millions upon millions of human beings standing there, all in absolute stark silence. As they step up one-by-one before the judgment bar of God to hear the condemnation and the wrath of God expressed against them, and the sentence passed to the lake of fire for all eternity. They'll stand there with heads bowed, holding their hands in absolute silence. There will be nothing they can say. They'll know that it's all over. And they'll know that everything has been answered against them. That's the horror of the silence of the great white throne judgment and the condemnation of those who are going to suffer the lake of fire.

That is not all. It says, in verse 19, that these Scriptures have been declared to those who are responsible for being responsive to them (those who are under these Scriptures) in order that they may be stopped relative to any excuses. And he adds one more point: God's purpose. All the world may become guilty before God. All the world is the Greek word "kosmos." In this case, the "kosmos" refers to the human inhabitants of the earth. You notice that it is preceded by the word "all: "all the "kosmos." Therefore, we know that this equals both Jew and gentile. While the Jew is the example (he's the case study here), what is true of him is also true of the gentile relative to his standing before God.

So, here all the world (all the inhabitants of the world) "may become." Here is something that is potentially true about them. The Greek word for "may become" is "ginomai." The way to translate that one here is: "may be shown to be." At the point of the indictment, there will be shown to be something here. It'll be actively true about them. This is in the subjunctive mood. This is potential about unbelievers. All the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth are going to be shown to be guilty. This word "guilty" is "hupodikos." It comes from two words. Let's break it up for just a minute. The first word is the preposition "hupo." That's the one that normally means "under" (instead of that word we had a little while ago). This word is "under," and the second word comes from "dike," which means "justice." So, the word here is declaring to be under judicial sentence. "Guilty" is not a good word to translate this Greek word. "Guilty" is not a good translation. Unbelievers are more than guilty. They're not only morally guilty, but they're under the future punishment of God.

What this word "hupodikos" is trying to tell us is that we are all liable to divine retribution. We are liable to pay the penalty to God that we deserve because of our sins. We are all liable for the lake of fire. That's what that word is saying. So, the Scriptures make it clear that none of us has an excuse relative to our sinful condition. And secondly, it makes it clear that we are all going to pay for our condition. We're all going to pay for the state in which we are. We have a liability which God is going to collect. And when it says, "Guilty before God," the word "God" has the definite article. It is: "before *the* God so that we are dealing with God the Father – the highest authority and judge in the universe.

Furthermore, it is at the end of the Greek verse. Whenever words are placed at the end of a Greek verse, that's a place of emphasis. It so happens that it's that same place here in the English translation as well. But the point is that Paul is stressing here that someday you are not only going to have your mouth closed so that you will no longer have excuses for your sin, but someday day you're going to stand before God Himself in order to pay the price for your condition in sin. Both of those things are going to happen to every unbeliever. This liability ultimately is going to be executed upon the unbeliever at the great white throne judgment.

So, now where goes your excuse; your good character; and, your good works. God has said that when you stand up there, your condition is going to be such that you will be silent. You will give no excuses. Furthermore, you will stand there knowing that you are in a situation where you are under judicial sentence, and you are now standing by to pay the price. God is going to collect the penalty that you have imposed upon yourself.

Verse 20 says, "Therefore." This is the Greek word "dioti." "Therefore" is a bad translation. It should be "because." This word "dioti" is used 22 times in the New Testament. Every time it means "because." So, that's what it means here also. It means "because." It introduces the reason why every excuse and defense of the unbeliever is silent, and all stand condemned to pay the price of the lake of fire. It says, "Because." Why are people in this condition? "Because by the deeds of the law," and the word "by" is "ek." It means "out of" or "from within:" "The deeds" are the "ergon." This is the Greek word for specific acts (individual actions) that a person may take. Here it means such acts as were prescribed by the Mosaic Law: the rituals; the ceremonies; the sacrifices; the feasts; and, the holy days. By these specific "ergon" (these specific acts) of the law system.

This is something else to notice. It says in English, "By the deeds of *the* law," but in the Greek, it is not *the* law. It is just "law." It is just "ergon" itself. That's very significant, because when the Greek does not use the word "the," it is speaking about a category of law. In other words, it's speaking about something greater again than just the Mosaic Law. It is speaking about any kind of human good words that we come up with in order to try to satisfy God against ourselves. It is any kind of works that we produce. The point that it says here is that no flesh is going to be justified by these human actions. There shall be no flesh justified. Literally, the Greek Bible says, "Every flesh shall not be justified:"

**Flesh**

"Every" stresses the fact that nobody escapes, and the word "flesh" that goes with it is the Greek word "sarx." "Sarx" stands for human beings here. Sometimes we use a part of a person. A person is a body: he is flesh; he is spirit; and, he is soul. Here the Scripture is just talking about the flesh part, and equating that to the whole human being.

We have a five-cent piece in our money system. It is made out of a metal called nickel, and so we call it a nickel. It's just part of what is true about the five-cent piece. We have dollar bills which are printed on paper with green ink. There was a time when dollar bills were called "greenbacks." It was simply taking one thing that was true about the dollar bill (the fact that it was green), and making that equivalent to the whole thing (the whole dollar bill). It was just making that a name for the whole unit of money.

**Justified**

So, this is what the Scripture does. It takes one part of man's nature (of man's structure), his flesh, and it equates to the whole person. So, when it says "flesh," it means human beings: "No human being will be justified." And again I remind you that the Greek says, "Every human being shall not be justified." The "not" goes with the "justified," and it's the strong "ou" (the strong "not." It means absolutely not. The word "justified" is "dikaioo." This word means to have a sinner's guilt and his penalty for sin removed, and absolute righteousness accredited to his account.

It is not enough to have your sins forgiven. You will not go to heaven because you had your sins forgiven. If you do not have also credited to your account absolute righteousness so that you are justified, you will not go to heaven. You must have your sins forgiven. That's negative. But you must also have a positive act of God. You must be given the absolute righteousness of God. Of course, that's the whole point of this book. This is the way to remove the sinner's guilt and the penalty of sin.

The same principle is stated, for example, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, where we read, "For He has made Him (Jesus Christ), who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Here we are told that Jesus Christ is the one who gives us His absolute righteousness. When we have that we are "dikaioo." Then we are justified.

We also have this stated in 1 Corinthians 1:30. This principle is stated in the words: "But of Him, are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." There is the word "dikaioo" again: "And sanctification and redemption." The word "righteousness" is from this same root word of "dikaioo."

So, justification is necessary to spend eternity in God's heaven. This is a legal standing. When you and I say that we have been justified by our faith in Christ, it does not mean that our character has been changed. It does not affect the character of a sinner. It does not mean that we now do not sin any more. That is spiritual maturity through doctrine that we grow into. That is sanctification after we have been justified. But when you are justified, you're the most rotten, stinking sinner you ever were before you were justified. And you can do all the terrible things that you did before you were justified. Yet, by the fact that you have accepted God's provision of absolute righteousness, God the judge makes a legal pronouncement upon you, and He says, "You're justified." That means all moral guilt has now been removed from you. That means that you have no penalty for your sins any longer imposed against you. You are out from under the wrath of God.

**Character**

What are you in your character? You still have an old sin nature. As a Christian, you're now going to have to learn to control that old sin nature. You used to like to do certain things in your unsaved days: things that were wrong; and, things that the Bible condemns. Don't be carried away by these testimonies that you hear sometimes. Somebody may come up and say, "I was an alcoholic, and then I met Jesus Christ and He freed me from the booze." Well, sometimes that does happen to people. But I want to tell you that there are some alcoholics who received Jesus Christ as their Savior, who celebrated it with a drink that they couldn't wait to get to. Are they justified? You bet you they are. They're just as justified as the person who, in the grace and providence of God, was released from his enslavement to drink. It does not change your character when you are justified.

These Scriptures have been declared to us, Paul says, "In order to show us that justification, which is the absolute essential for going to heaven, is something that we must have before God, but that it cannot be created by our human works." And that's his point here. You need this justification. You need God to make this pronouncement against you – that you are legally justified. But you cannot secure this through some works of your own.

This is in the future. Never in the future can a person secure justification by his good works. "Dikaioo" is passive. A sinner has to be justified. This has to be done for ourselves. Please notice that. This word is passive in the Greek language. So, anybody who comes along and thinks that he can justify himself by his works wouldn't say that if he could read Greek. He would look at that Greek word "justified," and he would say, "Hey, that's passive. That means that it's got to be done for me. That means it's got to be handed to me." So, mark that as passive so you'll know that that words is passive. It's a statement of fact.

It says, "To be justified in His sight." The Greek word for "in His sight" is "enopion." "Enopion" connotes "being opposite somebody's eyes." We would say, "In the presence of." This is looking to the time when a person dies, and he faces a holy God. No one, by his own efforts, can secure the absolute righteousness that God demands when you stand in His presence. It is in the sight of Him (in the sight of God). Therefore: "By the specific acts of some legal system (some religious system), there shall no human being be legally declared free of the moral guilt and the penalty of sin in God's eyes."

Then it says, "For." And here we go again with the word "gar," which is the word indicating that here is some explanation. Why is that true? "For by (and this means 'by means of') the law." Here we have again the word "nomos:" "By means of the law "(by means of this kind of a system). Here it is not "*the* law." It is just "law" in the Greek, indicating a category of human works. This is declaring to us that nobody is saved by some category of religious action.

**Human Works**

Like what, for example? Well, like coming to the end of a service and raising your hand to be saved. Have you ever heard of anybody doing that? Have you ever heard of anybody being told to do that work to be saved? It means not trying to be saved by confessing your sins. Have you ever heard of anybody be told to confess their sins in order to be saved? That's a human work? The Bible says, "You will not, by any act of the law like that (any religious act like that) be saved. It doesn't mean walking the aisle. You cannot be saved by that work – walking down an aisle. You cannot be saved by inviting Christ into your heart either. That is a human invention, and you should get away from using that phrase. It is contrary to sound doctrine. A person is not saved by inviting Christ into his heart, or even into his life. Some people know enough doctrine to know that the heart is a dirty, filthy garbage pile, and so they're a little squeamish about talking about inviting Christ into your heart (that means your mind). One second before you're born-again, it's the most rotten place in the world to invite Jesus Christ into. So, they say, "Well, I'll use the word 'life.'" You don't invite Christ into your life. That's a human work.

The Scriptures are very clear what you do. And all of you know it. All you have to do is repeat John 3:16 to yourself, and you know exactly what the Bible says is the way that we are saved. It is by believing on Christ as Savior. It is trusting His Word to save us. It is the message of the Philippians jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

This is what Romans 3:20 is telling us – that you will not be seen by that kind of a work. And you'll not be saved by the work of water baptism either. If you have not yet learned it, you better learn it. The only thing that water baptism does for a sinner is make a wet sinner out of a dry one. That's all it does. When you use our technique of immersion, it really does a wetting job. You really get wet. But that's all it does. It's a human work which will achieve nothing. You run the very serious danger of depending on that, and not trusting Christ. You go for the work.

Some of you are sitting here, and you know exactly what I'm talking about. You know exactly why Paul is condemning this, because there was a time that some of you raised a hand in a meeting; you walked forward down the aisle; and, you thought you were saved. Then one day the horrible truth hit you that you're still headed for the lake of fire.

**Water Baptism**

Some of you have been baptized. I've had some of you ask me, "Should I be baptized again? When I was baptized, I wasn't even a Christian. I went down into the water. I fulfilled all the identification symbols that Scripture calls on one to do. Just like the Ethiopian eunuch, I went down into the water; I came up out of the water; and, I was completely wet. Man, was I all wet? I didn't know what was up from down on salvation. Now I'm a Christian. I'd like to do it again because now I have a testimony to present.

**The Lord's Supper**

Some of you are counting on the Lord's Supper. I've sat in churches where I've heard the preacher, after serving the Lord's Supper, say, "Go and sin no more." What do you think that means? I thought he was saying (and so did everybody else) that because we had taken the Lord's Supper, we had had our sins forgiven. There are some people who would not miss the Lord's Supper because they think that somehow forgiving their sins are associated. That's that old Roman Catholic hocus-pocus. That's a human work.

**Circumcision**

Circumcision with the Jews was a big thing. They thought if they had their male children circumcised, the males thought they were in heaven, and there was no way that they could miss it, because of their circumcision.

**The Golden Rule**

Of course, every politician knows the golden rule in our day, and he's counting heavily that he's going to get to heaven by keeping the golden rule, and people are going to accept him because he keeps the golden rule.

**The Ten Commandments**

Better yet, the same is true about the Ten Commandments. You don't get to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments. The Word of God condemns that as an "ergon." That will never achieve eternal life for you. You're not going to get there by keeping the golden rule or the Ten Commandments, good as it may be to keep them, and as indeed they should be kept.

**All are Silenced**

The apostle Paul is winding things up. You don't quite get it in English. You get a little clue of it there, because do you see the word "is." It is in italics. There is no verb in the Greek. Whenever the language becomes intense, and the Greek wants to say things emphatically, it drops all the verbs, and just punches out the main ideas. Paul is closing this section. He says, "Now I don't think that there's anybody who can argue with me. I've made it clear. You're all hopelessly lost. There is no way out." When Paul finishes verse 20, he stands, and there's deadly silence – absolute deadly silence. Nobody has any excuse. Nobody has any rebuttal to give. They have indeed been silenced.

**A Knowledge of Sin**

He has indicated that, by the system of religious rituals of any kind, nobody will be saved. Well, what do you get from the Law? What do we have all this Mosaic system for? In order to get "a knowledge of sin." And the word "knowledge" is the Greek word "epignosis." This is the word for knowledge that means absolute, exact, full, usable knowledge.

**Knowledge**

If you were to study this word in the definitions of the lexicons and the Greek dictionaries, you would find that this is a distinctive word from another word for knowledge, which is simply "gnosis." "Gnosis" has to do with the perceptive mind – the things you learn. It's an intellectual thing. You don't necessarily relate to it. It's just a word that the lexicons tell us is an intellectual grasp. But "epignosis" has to do with the directive mind – that other function of your mentality. Directive means decision-making. And the word "epignosis," if you check this in the lexicons, is a word which is associated with an emotional reaction. It is a knowledge that causes you to do something? It's a knowledge that you have in such detail (in such fullness), that you have a personal sympathy with the information that you have been given.

Therefore, "epignosis" is the word for knowledge which involves a positive response to the information that God gives. Whereas, "gnosis" is simply knowledge in the intellect. It may not affect your character at all.

So, this means more than knowledge that is perceiving about sin. It means that the Word of God (and remember that that's what he means by the word "law" – the totality of Scripture) overwhelmingly conveys to us one solid impression, and that is that we are hopelessly unable to help ourselves, and therefore, we are moved by this knowledge to seek to be ready to receive what God has provided to help us out of our condition. That's the kind of knowledge that God the Holy Spirit gives. To the unbeliever, God the Holy Spirit gives this "epignosis."

The unbeliever doesn't have a human spirit which is alive to learn spiritual things. Therefore, God the Holy Spirit has to give him this knowledge (this "epignosis" knowledge) of sin. So, "epignosis" means more than perception. It means a view of sin which moves the sinner to secure God's absolute righteousness through Jesus Christ.

**Sin**

The word for sin is "hamartia." "Hamartia" is one of the many words for sin. It's the word for sin, specifically, that means "missing the mark" of God's standard of absolute righteousness. So, the Holy Mosaic Law reveals the sinfulness of mankind, and thus the need for righteousness outside of ourselves. That's the whole point of this main introductory section of Romans. We need a righteousness which comes from outside of ourselves. No system of human works, such as the Mosaic Law, could ever achieve personal justification.

In Galatians 2:16 and Galatians 3:21, Paul says, "We have achieved righteousness by Jesus Christ." Does that mean there's something wrong with the Law? No. He says, "If God could have given a law (and that means a ritual system) by which a person could be saved, God would have done it, because that's much easier for people to do. It's very difficult for people to say, "I'm a lost sinner, and I'm going to trust someone else to get me into heaven – Jesus Christ. That's very hard to do. It's much easier to give money in the offering box, or to go through some ritual of baptism, circumcision, or something else. It's very difficult to put trust in Christ. The Scripture says, "If God could have done it that way, it would have been done. But it couldn't.

**The Law**

That's what the law tells us. It gives us the knowledge of sin (the sinfulness of sin) – how bad sin is, so that we can't do a thing about it. Keeping the rituals of the Mosaic Law will provide you with a certain kind of righteousness. The Bible does tell us that. We've already learned that in our study of Philippians. It gives you a legal righteousness, but it does not give you absolute righteousness necessary for heaven (Philippians 3:9, Galatians 3:11).

You cannot be saved by keeping a system of rituals. The standard of the Mosaic Law then clearly places everyone under the divine curse of God (Galatians 3:10). The only escape is through Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:22).

So, the Bible today tells you if you are not a believer in Jesus Christ that you are under sin. The Bible has made it very clear in this passage in Romans that you cannot come up with any system of human works which would be acceptable to God, which you can equate with absolute righteousness. Without being declared by God legally justified, you cannot enter heaven: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. We trust that you will do so if you have not done so.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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