

Anything but Godly . . . Anyone but God

The Depravity of Man . . . The Deliverance of God – Part III

Romans 3:10-12

Introduction

We have begun our journey through the fourteen indictments leveled against humanity by the Holy Spirit – fourteen denunciations of mankind, listed by the Spirit of God through the apostle Paul, and recorded for us in Romans, chapter 3.

Two Sweeping Declarations Against Mankind

Paul began, as we have previously noticed, by making two sweeping declarations against mankind.

The universal depravity of mankind

1. First, he declared in verse 9b, the universal depravity of man. Depravity is a word that means, “wretched, ruined, sinful, degenerate, wicked, and perverse”.

The universal domination of mankind

2. Paul goes on to say, in verse 9b, that all of mankind is not only depraved in sin, but dominated by sin. He writes,

. . . *all [are] under sin*

Sin, from the Greek word “harmartion,” literally means, “to miss the mark”. The mark, or target, is the holiness and purity of God – and mankind, as a whole, is unable to hit the mark. The only exception was Jesus Christ, who walked on earth as sinless man and holy God.

So, Paul declares that there is not only universal depravity, but universal domination. You could translate the latter part of verse 9 to read, “. . . all are

under the dominion of sin”. In other words, everyone is enslaved to sin.

In Thomas Costain’s history entitled, *The Three Edwards*, he describes the life of Raynald III, a fourteenth-century duke in, what is now, Belgium. He was very overweight and was commonly referred to, behind his back, by his Latin nickname, “Crassus,” which means, “fat”.

After a violent argument, his younger brother, Edward, led a successful revolt against him. Edward’s soldiers captured Raynald, but did not kill him. Instead, Edward ordered a room built around Raynald in the Nieuwkerk castle, with a smaller doorway than normal. Edward then promised his brother that he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room. This would not have been difficult for many people under these conditions, since the room had several windows and the door of near normal size, none of which were locked or barred. All he had to do was lose weight and he would be free.

The problem, however, was Raynald’s undisciplined appetite. And Edward took advantage of it, I might add. Every day, Edward ordered, to that chamber, platters filled with delicious food. There were meats and cheeses, sweet dishes and tasty foods. Instead of gaining his freedom, Raynald only grew larger and larger. When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he would respond, “My brother is not my prisoner, he is his own prisoner . . . as far as I’m concerned, he is free to leave whenever he so will.”

Raynald stayed in that room for ten years and was not released until after Edward died in battle.

However, by then, his health was so ruined that he died within one year. He had indeed been a prisoner of his own appetite.¹

In Philippians, chapter 3, verse 19, Paul wrote that mankind's,

... god is their appetite ... [their] glory is in their shame, ... [they] set their minds on earthly things.

Paul wrote later, in his letter to the Romans, chapter 16, verse 18a, that,

... men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites ...

This literally means, men are slaves of their bellies or their stomachs.

This is a word that refers to the appetites of the physical world. The Bible specifically categorizes them, in I John, chapter 2, verse 16, as,

... the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the ... pride of life ...

Mankind does not know it and then, will not admit it, but he is enslaved to sin. And every day, he does nothing more than add to the heaviness of his guilt and shame as he revels in whatever his heart fancies – not caring about nor capable of escaping the coming judgment. He has no one to blame but himself.

Mankind, Paul has written in Romans, chapter 1, verse 20, and chapter 2, verse 1, is "... without excuse".

The apostle has used history, conscience, creation, logic, and reason to reveal the fact that no man, or woman, will ever stand before God and say that they deserve to get into heaven. No one will be able to say that their good deeds outweighed their bad deeds.

Now, in his closing argument about the guilt of mankind, Paul will draw on one additional record to prove his point.

Notice the beginning of verse 10, of chapter 3, where Paul writes,

as it is ...

(what?)

... written ...

In other words, Paul will now add the argument of the Old Testament to his prosecution that mankind is guilty before God and in deep trouble; Paul will bring to the witness stand, the Word of God.

If mankind thought there was a way to justify his ignorance of creation and conscience, history and

logic, he will discover that there is no way to squirm his way out of the witness of Scripture, as to the utter sinfulness of mankind.

By the way, the perfect tense is used in that phrase, "... it is written ...", which indicated the timelessness and permanence of what was written. In other words, the Bible was just as authoritative in the first century as it is in this century. It was descriptive of the Roman, and it is descriptive of the American, the Englishman, and the Irishman. In fact, the Bible perfectly describes the human, in any generation and in every country.

Three Categories of Mankind

Before we dive into the fourteen indictments, let me give you an outline of the next ten verses. It may do nothing for you, but I spent a lot of time on it and now I am going to make you listen to it!

Actually you might want to turn your Bibles sideways and write in the margin by these verses the following categories.

You might say, "Write in my Bible? I don't want to mess it up! I don't want to wear it out."

My friend, a Bible that is coming apart is usually owned by someone who isn't. A tattered Bible is the evidence of a consecrated believer.

I encourage you to write in the margins and in the flyleaves of your Bible. Let your Bible become your own commentary, with footnotes, quotes, and outlines.

Now, let me outline for you three categories of mankind.

Mankind's evil condition

1. Verses 10 through 12 reveal mankind's evil condition.

Mankind's evil communication

2. Verses 13 through 14 describe mankind's evil communication.

Mankind's evil chaos

3. Finally, verses 15 through 18 describe mankind's evil chaos.

Six Statements on the Evil Condition of Mankind

Now, in verses 10 through 12, Paul will describe the evil condition of mankind with six different statements.

Mankind is totally degenerate

1. First, Paul declares that mankind is totally degenerate.

Notice in verse 10,

as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one”

Paul is quoting from the Psalms, chapters 14 and 53, “. . . There is none righteous, not even one”.

The word “righteous,” or “dikaios” in the Greek, which will appear in a variety of forms some thirty times throughout the book of Romans, is a word you need to be able to define. The basic meaning of the term “righteous” is, “right before God”.ⁱⁱ

Obviously, one man writes, even the most vile person may occasionally do something commendable. But the apostle is not speaking of specific acts, or even of general patterns of behavior, but of man’s inner character. Paul’s point is that there is not a single person who has ever lived, apart from the sinless Lord Jesus Christ, whose innermost being could be characterized as righteous by God’s standard. And to prevent some people from thinking that they might be the exception, Paul added the words, “not even one”.ⁱⁱⁱ

As far as man’s character and inner being, he is unrighteous. And his unrighteousness affects every area of his life – his thoughts, his deeds, his relationships, his plans, and his goals.

Addison Leitch used to illustrate this by saying that, if the color of sin were blue, every aspect of us would be some shade of blue. Everything we touched would be stained blue; every conversation would be tinted blue.^{iv}

Just for a moment – look around for the color blue. Go ahead – look around until you see it. Stare at the people next to you – look around you for anything blue. You will see that there are many blue things!

Do you want to know something? If I had not asked you to do this, and I asked you, “Did you see all the blue stuff around today? We were surrounded by it!”

You would probably say, “I didn’t really notice!”

The truth is, we are blind to our unrighteousness because we really do not want to see it. We have learned to ignore it; to overlook it; to pay no attention to it.

And Paul declares, “There is no one who is righteous, not even one.”

In other words, we are surrounded by unrighteousness – ours and everyone else’s – and we hardly even notice!

Mankind is spiritually dense

2. The second thing Paul says about the evil condition of mankind is that he is not only totally degenerate, but mankind is spiritually dense.

Notice verse 11a, as Paul continues.

There is none who understands . . .

The context, of course, is spiritual issues and truth.

Paul wrote, in I Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 14, talking about the unbeliever,

A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

In Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 17b through 19, Paul wrote that unsaved individuals,

. . . walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

“Is there anyone who gets it, Paul?”

“No one!”

“Is there anyone in the world who grasps spiritual truth, apart from Jesus Christ?”

“No one!”

Now, this does not mean that an unbeliever cannot have a rational understanding of Christianity or what the Bible teaches. In one sense, a scholar can understand and explain theological principles as well as any other area of human knowledge, simply because theological truth is logical truth.^v

Therefore, an unbelieving philosophy professor can discuss the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and what it meant for those who followed Him.

James Montgomery Boice wrote of his days at Harvard University, where non-Christian professors presented the doctrines of Christianity so brilliantly that Christians would marvel at their lectures and be edified by them. Even unbelieving students would rise to their feet and applaud. But these professors did not believe what they were teaching. And, if they had been asked their opinion of what they were so accurately presenting, they would have said that it was all utter nonsense.^{vi}

I was talking to a man in our church whose friend is entering Duke Divinity School. The friend was amazed to discover that there were atheists on the faculty.

That is not unusual. I have heard atheists preach before. I have theological discourses and biblical commentaries in my library, written by men who were unbelievers.

II Timothy, chapter 3, verses 1 through 5a and verse 7, says,

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power . . . always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In other words, unbelievers can understand the facts of Scripture, but they do not understand the spiritual implications of Scripture. They can get the facts, but they cannot exercise faith.

Mankind is spiritually disconnected

3. That leads me to Paul's next descriptive indictment – mankind is not only totally degenerate and spiritually dense, he is, thirdly, spiritually disconnected.

Paul writes in verse 11,

There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God

What does it mean, “. . . there is none who seeks for God”? Let us begin to answer that by answering

the other side of that question. What does it mean to seek for God?

One author wrote,

When you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God becomes the focus of everything, the source of everything, the beginning and end of everything. To truly seek for God is to respect and adore His sovereign majesty and to feed on the truth of His word. It is to obey His commandments, to speak to Him in prayer, to live consciously in His presence with a desire to please Him. No one can do such things naturally, but only by the Spirit of God working through him. The natural inclination of man is to seek after their own interests. (Philippians 2:21)^{vii}

No one seeks after God like that unless they are sons and daughters of God through Christ. Thus, the world at large is not seeking after God.

“But wait,” you might say, “didn't the prophet Jeremiah write, in chapter 29, verse 13, that, if anyone seeks after God with his whole heart, he'll find God? That sounds like a contradiction to Romans.”

It is – unless you compare Scripture with Scripture and discover that the person who is seeking after God, is the one whom God is seeking out first.

You love God because God first – what? – loved you, according to I John, chapter 4, verse 19.

You sought after Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were lost, according to Luke, chapter 19, verse 10.

Who loved first? God! Who sought first? God! Who initiated salvation? God!

Jesus Christ said, in John, chapter 6, verse 44a,
No one can come to Me, unless the Father . . . draws him

If you are an unbeliever, I cannot draw you to faith in Christ. In fact, you cannot even draw yourself.

Why not? Because those who do not believe, according to the book of Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 1, are considered,

. . . dead in . . . trespasses and sin

They are considered not sick, but dead; not in a coma, but dead; not spiritually unconscious, but spiritually dead. And what can a corpse do? Nothing.

If you bring a plate of food before him, he is not hungry – he is dead. If you put pictures of a ski resort in the Swiss Alps in front of him, he will not be interested in skiing – he is dead. If you roll in front of him your big screen TV and replay the last sixty seconds of the Super Bowl (when the Patriots got lucky this year), you will not hear one cheer from him – he is dead.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world is spiritually dead. You might say, “But look at all the religions in the world – aren’t they seeking after God?”

No, my friend, they are seeking anyone but God.

Like Adam, who sinned in the garden and then went to hide from God, mankind has been hiding ever since. Hiding behind the religious fig leaves of their own pious efforts, their religious symbols and liturgies – they are not seeking God, they are hiding from God.

They are searching, searching, searching, but they are searching for anyone but God. And, they are willing to study everything, but this Book – the Bible.

Recently, I was at a bookstore and I stopped by a table of discounted books. One book was entitled, *When Planets Promise Love; Your Romantic Destiny Through Astrology*. On the back of the book, a question was asked. Let me read this to you.

Are you searching for a successful romantic partnership? [This book] presents proven celestial matchmaking methods . . . identify what you want and need in a partner, and the most favorable times to meet him or her when romantic Venus or passionate Mars are in your houses of love and partnership. Discover which planetary ties are absolutely essential for ensuring compatible temperaments, lasting attraction, and appreciation of each other. Let your love planets reveal how to find a romance that is truly cosmic.

In other words, seek wisdom for life from created things, rather than the Creator of all things – seek anyone, but God.

Another book that I picked up was by the *New York Times* best selling author, James Van Praagh. His book was entitled, *Reaching to Heaven*. In it he details conversations with his spirit guides, who are, I believe, demons. I believe that because Paul wrote in Galatians, chapter 1, verse 8, that, even if an angelic being came and delivered a different gospel than that of the Bible, let that angel be accursed. But

these spirit guides have shown James Van Praagh the other side of eternity. He writes,

You will have a chance to create your own home setting on the astral level. Perhaps you would like to have a small cottage with your own garden surrounded by a babbling brook somewhere in the countryside. You will be able to conceive of and create your home with your thoughts. Once when I was doing a television interview, I did a reading for a young lady in the audience. During the reading her father came through [to me] and she asked what he was doing. Her father [said] that he was having a great time at the races betting on horses! The host of the show glanced over at me with an odd look and said, “Oh, come on, you mean to tell me there is horse racing in heaven?” I told him, “Well, for this man that is heaven to him. He enjoys it.” The girl turned to me and gleefully declared, “That’s my dad! He went to the track ever Saturday.”^{viii}

So, the spirit guides are saying that heaven is whatever you want it to be. “How tragic,” I thought, “even in heaven we are not freed from our selfishness. Heaven is simply an opportunity to indulge eternally in self-centeredness.”

In the preface to his book, he writes,

Right inside you lies a whole new world . . . of truth. To reach it you must journey along the road less traveled, [the road] that leads toward selfdom (the kingdom of self), independence, and empowerment – to the greatness that is you^{ix}.

My friends, the truth, according to God’s Word, is this – the path to heaven does not create a kingdom of self, but death to self and the pursuit of the kingdom of God. And, it does not lead you to greater independence, but dependence upon Christ, who is the Rock of your salvation. And, true empowerment, that this author promised, is not in discovering the greatness that is you, but in discovering the greatness that is God.

The world is anything but godly – and it wants anyone but God.

Paul said it this way, in Romans, chapter 3, verses 10b and 11,

. . . There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God

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ⁱ Thomas Costain, The Three Edwards, quoted in “To Illustrate,” Leadership Magazine (1984), p. 44.

ⁱⁱ John MacArthur Jr., Romans (Chicago, Illinois, Moody Press, 1991), p. 182.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 182.

^{iv} Addison Leitch, quoted by R. Kent Hughes in Romans: Righteousness From Heaven (Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books, 1991), p. 75.

^v James Montgomery Boice, Romans: Volume One (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1991), p. 294.

^{vi} Ibid., p. 294.

^{vii} MacArthur Jr., p. 185.

^{viii} James Van Praagh, Reaching To Heaven (New York, NY, A Dutton Book; Penguin Group, 1999), p. 58.

^{ix} Ibid., p. xiii.